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Vaiṣṇava Art
and
Iconography of Kashmir

CC-0 Kashmir Research Institute. Digitzed by eGangotri

To
my esteemed preceptor
Dr. T.K. Biswas

CC-0 Kashmir Research Institute. Digitzed by eGangotri

Vaiṣṇava Art and Iconography of Kashmir

BANSI LAL MALLA

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Contents

Preface vii
List of Illustrations xi
1. Kashmir Vaiṣṇavism—A Historical Perspective 1
2. Viṣṇu 7
3. Vaikuṇṭha-Caturmūrti 20
4. Āyudhapuruṣas 29
5. Incarnations of Viṣṇu 34
   Vāmana-Trivikrama 35
   Nṛsiṁha 36
   Varāha 38
   Hayagriva 39
6. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa 41
7. Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī 45
8. Syncretic Images 50
   Hari-Hara 50
   Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha 52
9. Minor Deities 55
   Lakṣmī 55
   Vaiṣṇavī 56
   Vārāhī 57
   Gaṅgā and Yamunā 57
   Garuḍa 59
Bibliography 60
Index 65
Plates 67

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Preface

There is no gainsaying the fact that Kashmir has been a seat of learning and erudition from its hoary past. Its beauty and verdure, snow-capped peaks, sheen of sparkling waters, rustling leaves of dense forests, lakes and springs have charmed poets and creative minds to sing its praises calling it a paradise on earth. Inspired and motivated by the pristine beauty of landscape, the myriad minded genius of Kashmir has made immense contributions to all segments of human knowledge and creative ventures. Poetics, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, religion and music are some such domains as are vitally enriched by the Kashmirian share of contributions. Kashmir has recognisably carved a niche for itself in the total fabric of culture available in the Indian sub-continent and any attempt aimed at diminution of its role-profile as such does not deserve notice. The Kashmirian life-style all through the ages right from its seminal stages to the present state of civilisation has been that of tolerance, mutual goodwill and humanism resulting in forging and strengthening of social bonds primarily responsible for shaping of a cultural ethos, which, in turn, affects the life of people living in close touch with it. Despite formidable mountain ramparts, Kashmir received influences of all sorts from the Indian subcontinent, but the innate Kashmirian genius absorbed them to suit its own cultural and aesthetic needs and aspirations.

Be it put that the spirit of synthesis and assimilation has been the keynote of the Kashmirian culture. Buddhism, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism with their cult and credo got mixed up with the indigenous cult of Nāgas and Paiśācas resulting in a new mould of religion, ritual, worship and myth-making. The interaction and interpenetration between Buddhism and Śaivism, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, and again between Buddhism, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism and the indigenous cults and thought-currents generated new values of humanism thereby vitally enriching life and aesthetic standards allied with it. Presentday attempts to insulate Kashmir from humanism and synthetical modes of thinking cannot be overlooked as a mere aberration as these are aimed at destroying the essential genius of Kashmir.

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Early Kashmir in terms of religious systems was dominated by Buddhism and Śaivism. While studying the Kashmirian culture, it is safe to put that besides the above-mentioned religious systems Vaiṣṇavism was equally popular and well-circulated. Various religious and historical texts support the view that the Kashmirians hailed Vaiṣṇavism the same way as they had hailed and embraced Buddhism and Śaivism. Names of lakes, mountain-peaks and places are evidence enough to establish the well-entrenched presence of Vaiṣṇavism in Kashmir. The *Pāñcarātra* cult not only found its echo here, but got enriched by the fertile mind of Kashmir. The said cult led the creative minds to mould and sculpt images known as Vaikuṇṭha with their inherent characteristic features. The sweep of the Vaiṣṇava religion in the valley preserved and enriched many such traditions as were getting extinct elsewhere in the country. The Kashmirian contribution to the domain of Vaiṣṇava sculpture has been both peculiar and enormous.

Some stray efforts have been made in the past to highlight the Vaiṣṇava iconography of Kashmir, but what has been lacking is a cohesive and comprehensive work on the subject detailing out the origin and growth of this segment of artistic expression. The rich heritage of the Kashmirian iconography has inspired me to delve deep into it and present comprehensive details of the Vaiṣṇava iconography of Kashmir.

The present work studies Vaiṣṇavism and its impact on iconography in a historical perspective. The primary sources of images and icons portraying Vaiṣṇava themes have been utilised. The epigraphical and literary materials have been profusely exploited to reconstruct the history of the Vaiṣṇava religion with a view to reinterpreting the Kashmirian iconography. Various conceptions available with us are actually shrouded in mystery. An attempt to unravel the mystery around them has been made with a view to allowing a fuller understanding of the developments in the field and their impact on the Kashmirian iconography.

I in all humility accept the good done unto me by many of my friends and teachers and guides. I have no hesitation to admit that the present work would not have been possible without their suggestions and valued guidance. I am highly indebted to my preceptor, Dr. T.K. Biswas, Joint Director, Bharat Kala Bhavan, B.H.U., Varanasi. He has been a great source of inspiration to me and it is his precious guidance that has led me to undertake the present work.

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Bansi Lal Malla

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. *Viṣṇu*, Bijbehara (?) (Anantnag), 6th-7th cent. A.D., Grey schist. S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 2. *Viṣṇu with Cakrapuruṣa and Gadādevī*, Bijbehara, 7th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 3. *Standing deity (Viṣṇu in pedimented niche)*, western wall, main shrine, Mārtaṇḍa (Anantnag) Sun Temple, 1st half of 8th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone.

Fig. 4. *Viṣṇu*, two-armed, Kashmir, 10th cent. A.D., Dark grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 5. *Vāsudeva*, Kashmir, 9th cent. A.D., Bronze, Pan-Asian Collection.

Fig. 6. *Viṣṇu*, Verinag (Anantnag), 14th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 7. *Viṣṇu killing demons*, detail from Devasar (Anantnag) brass frame, Early 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 8. *Viṣṇu seated on his mount Garuda*, Dhumatbhal (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Present location (?).

Fig. 9. *Viṣṇu seated on his mount Garuḍa*, Kashmir, 12th cent. A.D., Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple, Bulbul Lankar, Srinagar.

Fig. 10. *Viṣṇu in Yogāsana*, detail from Devasar (Anantnag) brass frame, Early 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 11. *Metal (brass) frame from Devasar (Anantnag), depicting various incarnations of Viṣṇu, etc.*, Early 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 12. *Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu*, Dhumatbhal (Anantnag), 10th-11th cent. A.D., Location unknown.

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Fig. 13. *Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu*, detail from Devasar (Anantnag) image frame (brass), Early 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 14. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu*, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid 9th cent. A.D., Fine grained limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 15. *Kapila face*, back view of Fig. 14.

Fig. 16. *Vaikuṇṭha (bust)*, Kashmir, 9th cent. A.D., Greenish limestone, Private Collection (Srinagar).

Fig. 17. *Kapila face*, back view of the above image (Fig. 16).

Fig. 18. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu (bust)*, Tapar (Baramula), Early 10th cent. A.D., Grey limestone.

Fig. 19. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu*, Verinag (Anantnag), 12th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 20. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu* (Anantnag), 12th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 21. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu*, Verinag (Anantnag), 13th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 22. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu*, Verinag (Anantnag), 13th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 23. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu*, Verinag (Anantnag), 14th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 24. *Viṣṇu-Caturvyūha*, Verinag (Anantnag), 9th-10th cent. A.D., Dark grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 25. *Vaikuṇṭha seated on his vehicle Garuḍa*, Kashmir, 10th cent. A.D., Bronze, Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

Fig. 26. *Back view* of above image (Fig. 25).

Fig. 27. *Vaikuṇṭha seated on Garuḍa*, Verinag (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 28. *Vaikuṇṭha seated on Garuḍa*, Dhumatbhal (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Present location (?).

Fig. 29. *Vaikuṇṭha seated in līlāsana* (Brahmā in kneeling posture on his right side), detail from Devasar (Anantnag) brass frame, 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 30. *Vaikuṇṭha seated in līlāsana*, detail from Devasar brass frame, 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 31. *Gadādevī*, fragment of Viṣṇu image, Avantipur (Pulwama), 9th cent. A.D., Fine grained limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 32. *Cakrapuruṣa*, fragment of Viṣṇu image, Avantipur, 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 33. *Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu*, detail from Devasar (Anantnag) image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 34. *Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu*, detail from Devasar image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 35. *Nṛsiṁha killing Hiraṇyakaśipu*, detail from Devasar brass frame, 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 36. *Nṛsiṁha*, Verinag (Anantnag), 12th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 37. *Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu*, detail from Devasar image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 38. *Hayagriva form of Viṣṇu*, detail from Devasar image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 39. *Damaged image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*, seated on Garuḍa, 9th cent. A.D., Zeithyar (Srinagar).

Fig. 40. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (Standing)*, 12th cent. A.D., Lalahar (Pulwama), Present location (?).

Fig. 41. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, seated in Padmasana*, 12th-13th cent. A.D., Devasar, Private Collection (Devasar).

Fig. 42. *Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī*, Bijbehara (Anantnag), Late 10th-early 11th cent., Present location (?).

Fig. 43. Drawing of Fig. 42.

Fig. 44. *Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī*, Verinag (Anantnag), 12th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 45. *Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī (Upper part)*, Kashmir, 13th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 46. *Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī*, Kashmir, 11th cent. A.D., Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin.

Fig. 47. *Hari-Hara*, Kashmir, 8th-9th cent. A.D., Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin.

Fig. 48. *Hari-Hara* (Back view).

Fig. 49. *Hari-Hara*, Dhumatbhal (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Present location (?).

Fig. 50. *Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha* (?), Detail from Devasar image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 51. *Gajalakṣmī*, Bijbehara (Anantnag), 5th-6th cent. A.D., Dark brown limestone, Śiva temple, Bijbehara.

Fig. 52. *Bhairava flanked by mātṛkās*, Bijbehara (Anantnag), Early 8th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, Early panel fixed in the wall of late Śiva temple.

Fig. 53. *Vaiṣṇavī* (head missing), Pandrethan (Srinagar), 10th cent. A.D. (?), Limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 54. *Vārāhī*, Pandrethan (Srinagar), 10th cent. A.D. (?), Limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 55. *Gaṅgā on left, antarāla, main shrine*, Mārtaṇḍa (Anantnag), First half of 8th cent. A.D., Sun temple, Mārtaṇḍa.

Fig. 56. *Yamunā*, Baramula, 8th cent. A.D., Grey schist, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

Fig. 57. *Gaṅgā in niche on left*, Avantisvāmin temple, quadrangle porch, outer chamber, northern wall, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone.

Fig. 58. *Yamunā in niche on right*, Avantisvāmin temple, quadrangle porch, outer chamber, southern wall, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone.

Fig. 59. *Yamunā*, Dhumatbhal (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Present location (?).

Fig. 60. *Frieze with Garuḍas in the medallions*, Avantisvāmin temple, quadrangle porch, outer chamber, north wall, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone.

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Fig. 61. *Viṣṇu temple facing northwest*, main shrine, from north of quadrangle, Buniyar (Baramula), Mid 8th cent. A.D., Granite.

Fig. 62. *Viṣṇu temple ruins*, from northwest, Tapar (Baramula), Early 10th cent. A.D., Grey limestone.

Fig. 63. *Avantisvāmin temple*, quadrangle porch, inner side, view from courtyard, from east, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid. 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone.

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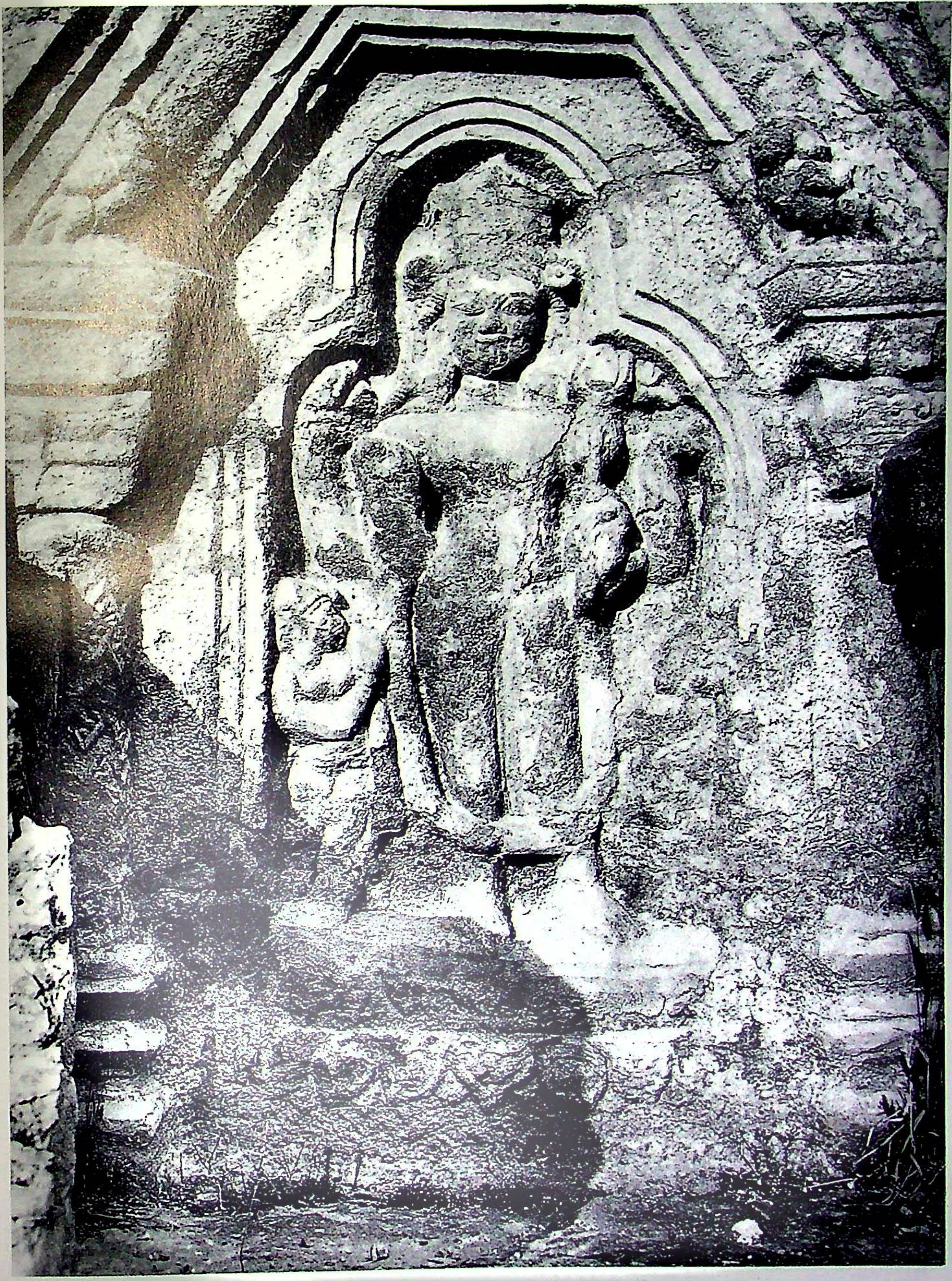

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Fig. 8. *Viṣṇu seated on his mount Garuḍa*, Dhụmatbhal (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Present location (?).

Fig. 12. *Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu*, Dhumatbhal (Anantnag), 10th-11th cent. A.D., Location unknown.

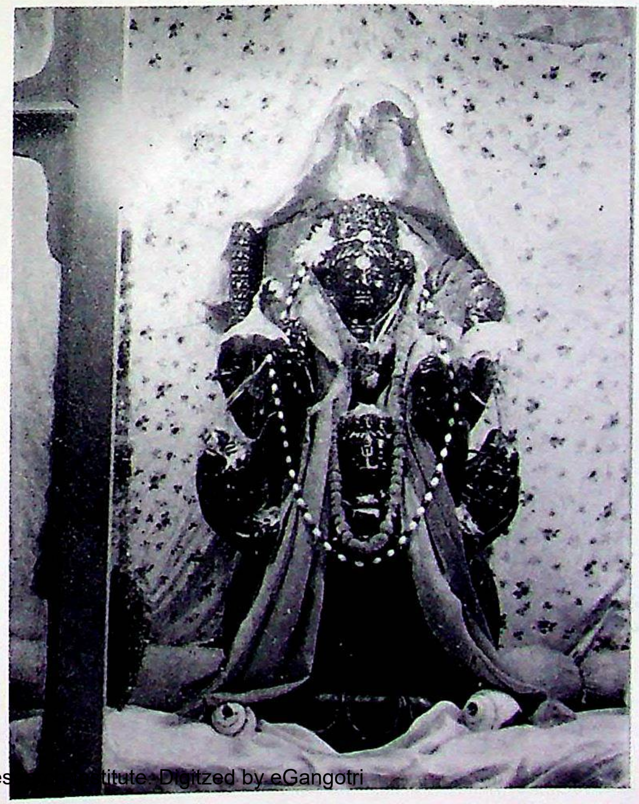

Fig. 9. *Viṣṇu seated on his mount Garuḍa*, Kashmir, 12th cent. A.D., Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple, Bulbul Lankar, Srinagar.

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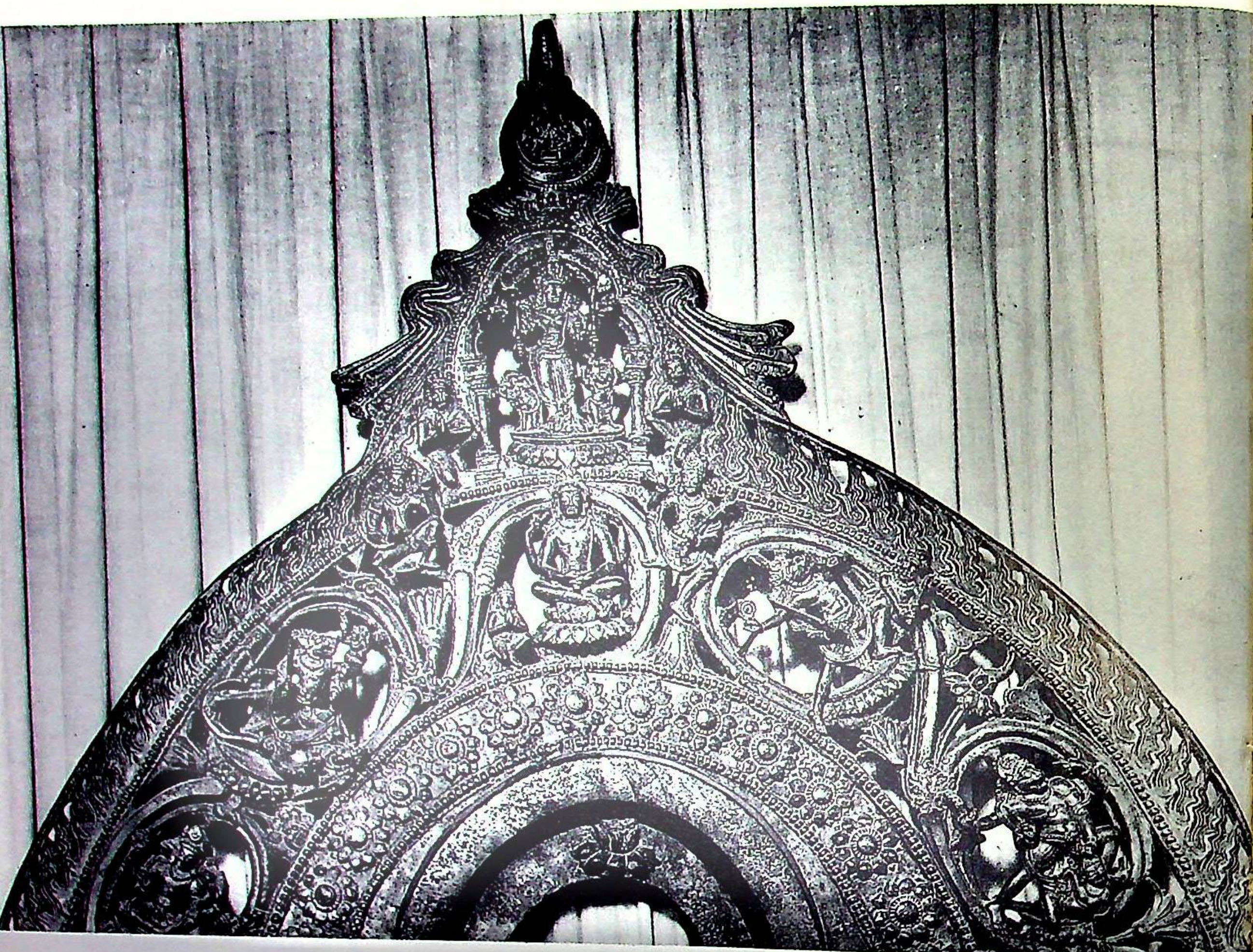

Fig. 10. *Viṣṇu in Yogāsana*, detail from Devasar (Anantnag) brass frame, Early 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 11. *Metal (brass) frame from Devasar (Anantnag), depicting various incarnations of Viṣṇu, etc.*, Early 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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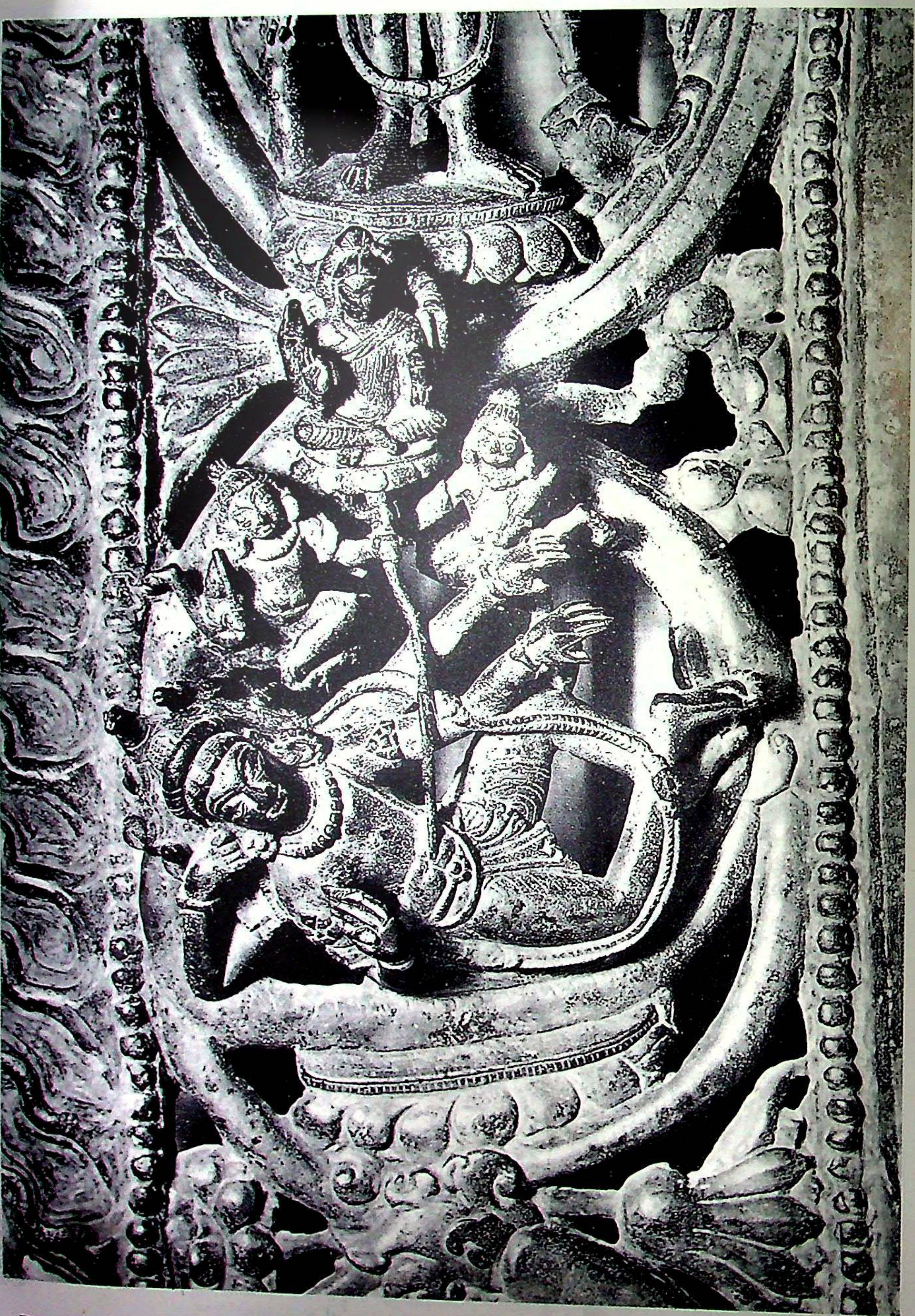

Fig. 13. *Śeṣaśāyi Viṣṇu*, detail from Devasar (Anantnag) image frame (brass). Early 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 18. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu (bust)*, Tapar (Baramula). Early 10th cent. A.D., Grey limestone.

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Fig. 14. *Vaikuntha Visnu*, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid 9th cent. A.D., Fine grained limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 15. *Kapila face*, back view of Fig. 14.

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Fig. 16. *Vaikuṇṭha (bust)*, Kashmir, 9th cent. A.D., Greenish limestone. Private Collection (Srinagar).

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Fig. 17. *Kapāla face*, back view of the above image (Fig. 16).

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Fig. 19. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu*, Verinag (Anantnag), 10th cent. A.D., Grey lime-stone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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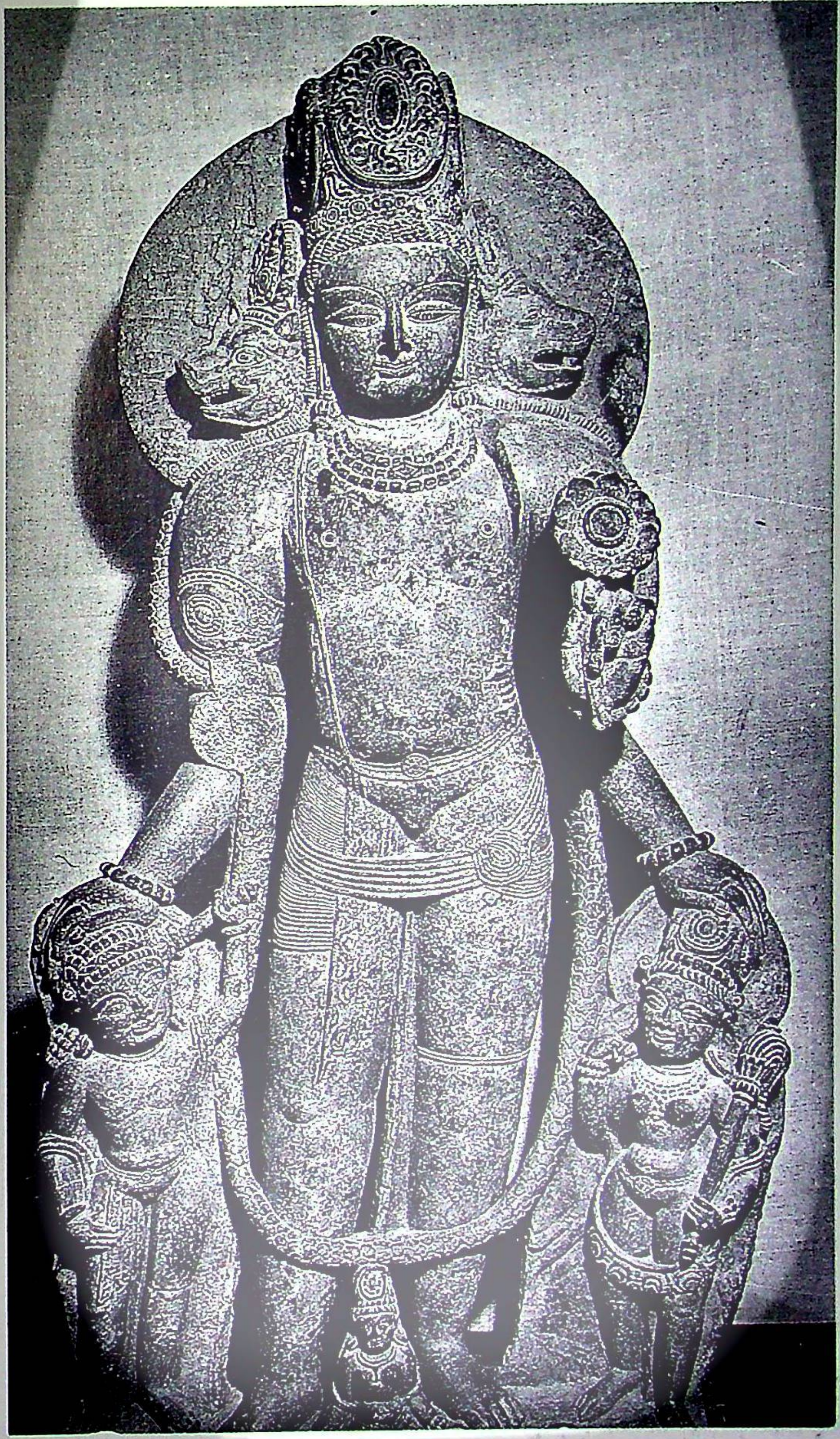

Fig. 20. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu* (Anantnag), 12th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 21. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu*, Verinag (Anantnag), 10th cent. A.D. Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 22. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu*, Verinag (Anantnag), 13th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 23. *Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu*, Vernag (Anantnag).
14th cent. A.D., Grey limestone,
S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 24. *Viṣṇu-Caturvyūha*, Verinag (Anantnag), 9th-10th cent. A.D., Dark grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 26. *Back view* of above image (Fig. 25).

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Fig. 28. *Vaikuṇṭha seated on Garuḍa*, Dhumatbhal (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Present location (?).

Fig. 27. *Vaikuṇṭha seated on Garuḍa*, Verinag (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 29. *Vaikuṇṭha seated in līlāsana* (Brahmā in kneeling posture on his right side), detail from Devasar (Anantnag) brass frame, 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 30. *Vaikuṇṭha seated in lalitāsana*, detail from Devasar brass frame, 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 33. *Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu*, detail from Devasar (Anantnag) image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 31. *Gadādevī*, fragment of Viṣṇu image, Avantipur (Pulwama), 9th cent. A.D., Fine grained limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 32. *Cakrapuruṣa*, fragment of Visnu image, Avantipur, 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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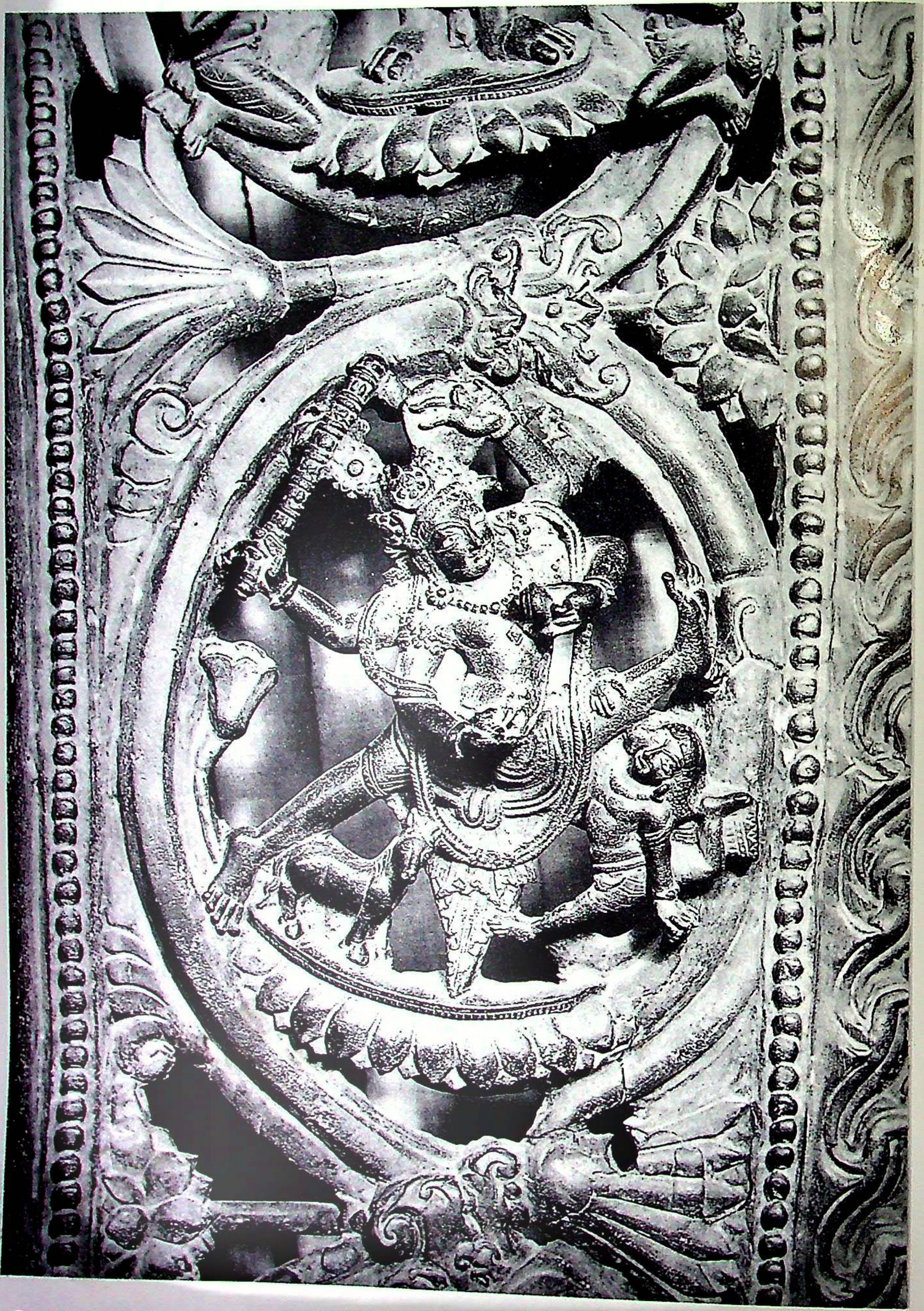

Fig. 34. *Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu*: detail from Devasar image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 35. *Nṛsiṁha killing Hiraṇyakaśipu*, detail from Devasar brass frame, 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 36. *Nṛsiṁha*, Verinag (Anantnag), 12th cent. A.D., Grey limestone. S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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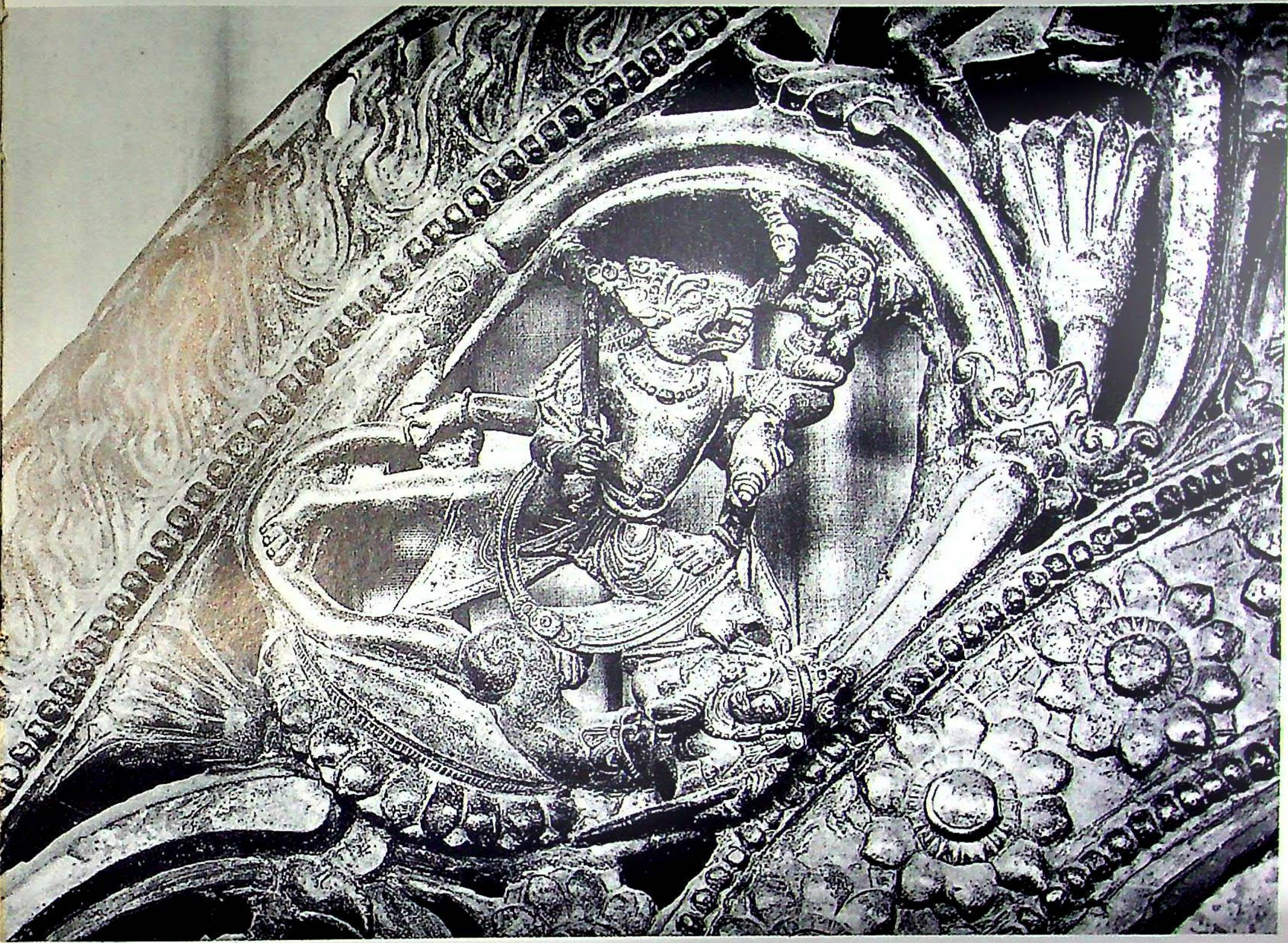

Fig. 37. *Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu*, detail from Devasar image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 38. *Hayagriva form of Visnu*, detail from Devasar image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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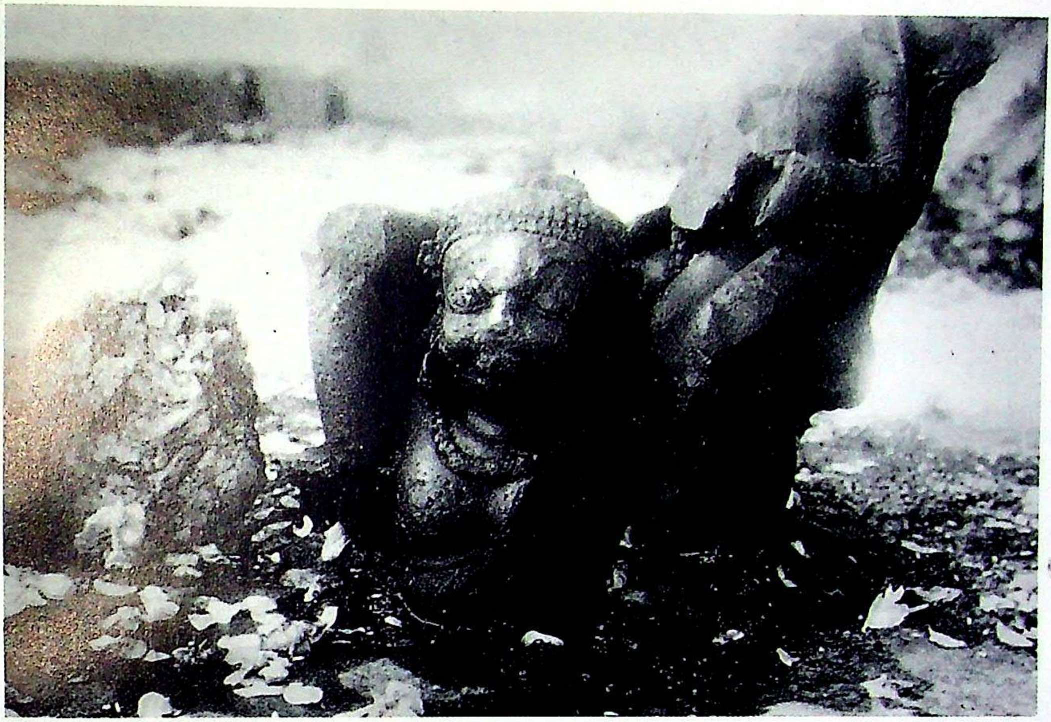

Fig. 39. *Damaged image of Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa,* seated on Garuḍa, 9th cent. A.D., Zeithyar (Srinagar).

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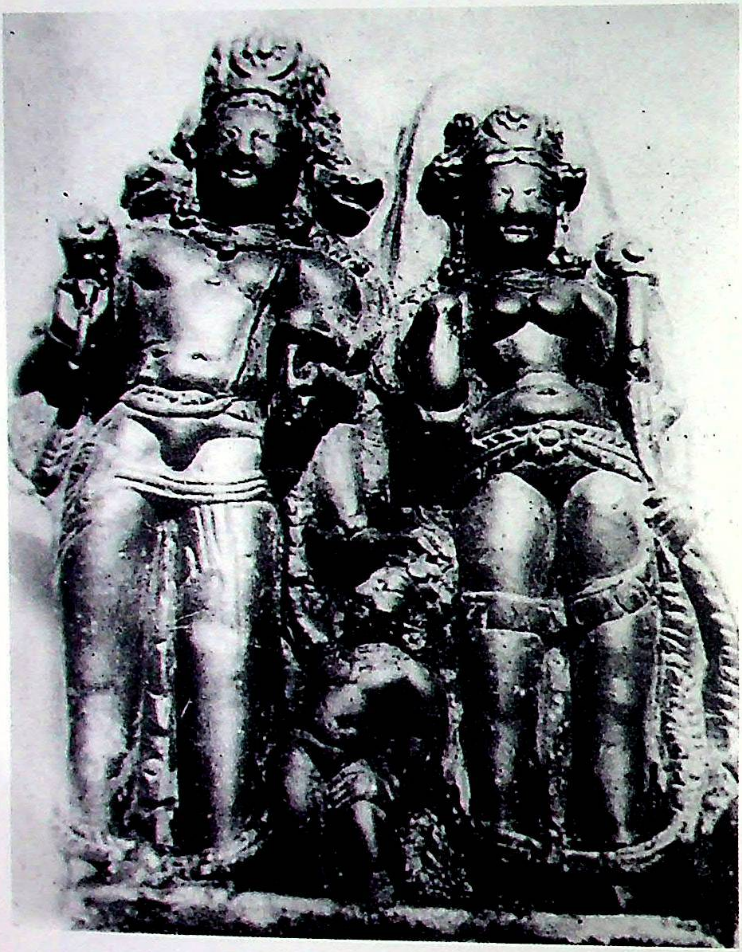

Fig. 40. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (Standing)*, 12th cent. A.D., Lalahar (Pulwama), Present location (?).

Fig. 41. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, seated in Padmasana*, 12th-13th cent. A.D., Devasar, Private Collection (Devasar).

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Fig. 46. *Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī*, Kashmir, 11th cent. A.D., Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin.

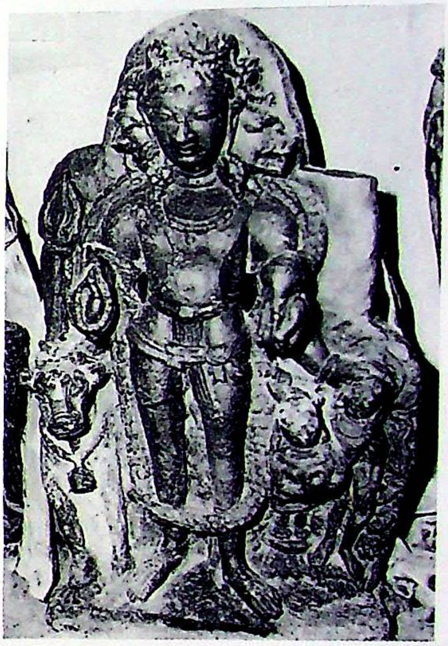

Fig. 49. *Hari-Hara*, Dhumatbhal (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Present location (?).

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Fig. 42. *Vāsudeva-Lakṣmi*, Bijbehara (Anantnag), Late 10th-early 11th cent., Present location (?).

Fig. 43. Drawing of Fig. 42.

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Fig. 47. *Hari-Hara*, Kashmir, 8th-9th cent. A.D., Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin.

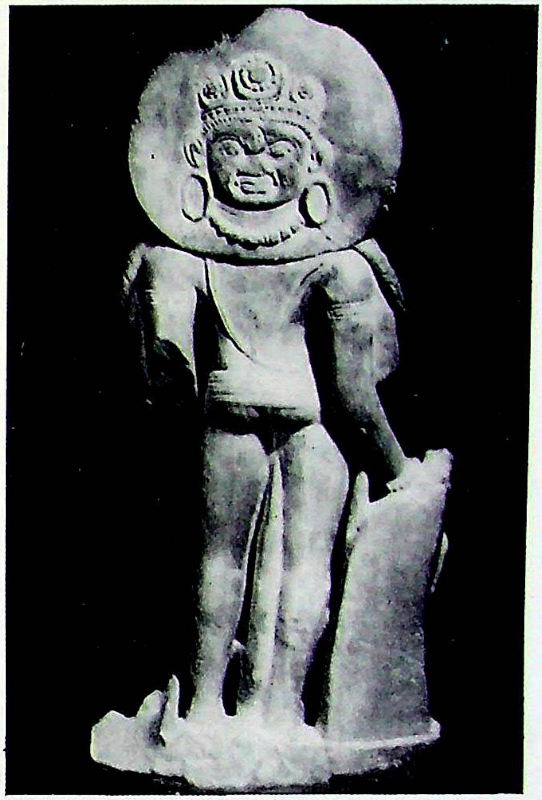

Fig. 48. *Hari-Hara* (Back view).

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Fig. 44. *Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī*, Verinag (Anantnag), 12th cent. A.D., Grey lime-stone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 45. *Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī (Upper part)*, Kashmir, 13th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 50. *Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha* (?), Detail from Devasar image frame (brass), 10th cent. A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 53. *Vaiṣṇavī* (head missing), Pandrethan (Srinagar), 10th cent. A.D. (?), Limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 52. *Bhairava flanked by mātṛkās*, Bijbehara (Anantnag), Early 8th cent. A.D., Grey limestone, Early panel fixed in the wall of late Śiva temple.

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Fig. 51. *Gajalakṣmī*, Bijbehara (Anantnag), 5th-6th cent. A.D., Dark brown limestone, Śiva temple, Bijbehara.

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Fig. 54. *Vārāhī*, Pandrethan (Srinagar), 10th cent. A.D. (?), Limestone, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 55. *Gaṅgā on left, antarāla, main shrine,* Mārtaṇḍa (Anantnag), First half of 8th cent. A.D., Sun temple, Mārtaṇḍa.

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Fig. 56. *Yamunā*, Baramula, 8th cent. A.D., Grey schist, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

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Fig. 57. *Gaṅgā in niche on left*, Avantisvāmin temple, quadrangle porch, outer chamber, northern wall, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone.

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Fig. 58. *Yamunā in niche on right*, Avantisvāmin temple, quadrangle porch, outer chamber, southern wall, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone.

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Fig. 60. *Frieze with Garuḍas in the medallions*, Avantisvāmin temple, quadrangle porch, outer chamber, north wall, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone.

Fig. 59. *Yamunā*, Dhumatbhal (Anantnag), 11th cent. A.D., Present location (?).

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Fig. 62. *Viṣṇu temple ruins*, from northwest, Tapar (Baramula), Early 10th cent. A.D., Grey limestone.

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Fig. 63. *Avantisvamin temple*, quadrangle porch, inner side, view from court-yard, from east, Avantipur (Pulwama), Mid. 9th cent. A.D., Bluish grey limestone.

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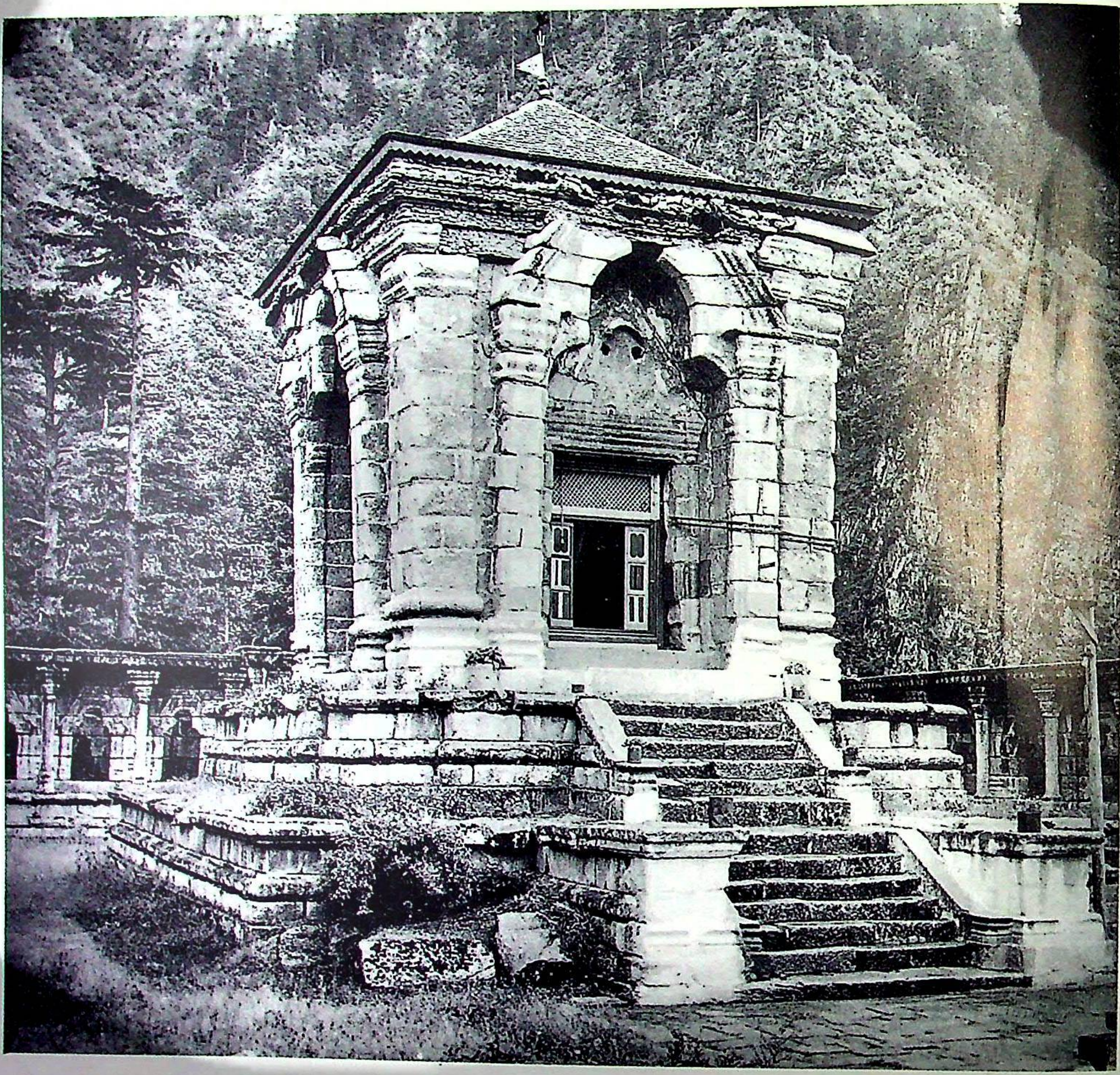

Fig. 61. *Viṣṇu temple facing northwest*, main shrine, from north of quadrangle, Buniyar (Baramula), Mid 8th cent. A.D., Granite.

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1

Kashmir Vaiṣṇavism—A Historical Perspective

Kashmir, the land of Śāradā, has been a great centre of Buddhist and Brahmanical art and religion in ancient and medieval times. There are historical notices available to establish the view that Buddhism as a religion and faith in Kashmir enjoyed supremacy over other religious creeds and cults, which had already been formed or were in the process of formation. As per the statement of Rhys Davids, Buddhism being the most tolerant religion of world religions did not oppose or obstruct other religious thought-currents to shape the minds of people either at mass level or at intellectual plane. Kashmir is well known for being a Buddhist seat of learning since the time Aśoka introduced Buddhism in the region. He is credited with the establishment of Srinagri (city of splendour and beauty), which was littered over with numerous Caityas and Vihāras. Though Buddhism was the dominant creed, Kashmir had a well-entrenched history of Śaivism, which can be traced back to its hoary past. The popular form of liṅga worship was practised by the mass of people. It is, therefore, safe to aver that there was a process of interaction going on between Buddhism and Śaivism. A time came when the Śaivite creed blossomed forth through a new philosophy, which was shaped by brilliant minds not satisfied with the Buddhist exposition of God, world and man. They presented a new perspective to combat the Buddhist logic and credo. The tussle at the level of intellect led to the birth of the philosophy of monism, which presented new vistas for tackling philosophical issues from a novel standpoint. Meanwhile new developments were taking place in the field of religion and art in the Indian sub-continent. The Vaiṣṇava cult and credo was emerging with new perspectives leaving its deep imprint on inquisitive minds and general mass of people. This religious thought-current also found its way into Kashmir, which possessed rare intellectual and imaginative genius to assimilate the spirit of the new religious mode of thinking. Kashmir did not only receive various religious, intellectual and art impulses, but also gave them a new shape with a view to transforming them to suit its own religious,

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intellectual and aesthetic needs and aspirations. There has been an active exchange of ideas going on between Kashmir and rest of the Indian subcontinent. Mountain ramparts never proved a barrier to the flow of religious, intellectual and aesthetic thought-currents and trends into Kashmir, leaving their imprint on the local genius only to generate a new ferment resulting in the enrichment of the cultural mosaic deeply entrenched in and reflecting the life of the Kashmirians as a whole.

Ramanuja, the founder of qualified monism, is said to have paid a visit to the Vale of Kashmir to propagate his brand of Vaiṣṇavism[1] along with its philosophical propositions with a view to combating Śaivism, which as a philosophy had left its impact on South India only to generate a new Śaivite movement there. He when in Kashmir must have certainly proved a source of strength to the followers of the creed. Though Ramanuja's visit to Kashmir is dated somewhere in the 11th century A.D., it is proof enough to determine the role-profile that Kashmir over the years had come to acquire in regard to the Vaiṣṇava cult and creed in general. Not only was the mass mind deeply impressed by the Vaiṣṇava religious patterns of worship, but it also provided a new impulse to the Kashmirian genius to make new additions to the philosophical doctrines of the creed and weave a new web of mythology in tune with Vaiṣṇavite gods and goddesses. The *Nilamata Purāṇa*, which is dominantly a Vaiṣṇavite text, gives an elaborate account of Vaiṣṇava impact on the life of the Kashmirians, who shaped their ethical pattern of life and aesthetic expression in consonance with Vaiṣṇava tenets. The valley was a seat of Viṣṇu in the form of *Cakrin*, says the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*.[2] The *Nilamata* text is replete with eulogies in praise of Viṣṇu, who, according to it, is lauded and honoured by Brahmā and Śiva too.[3]

Vaiṣṇavism in Kashmir with its protracted history can be said to reflect a synthesis of various Vaiṣṇava cults. The religious aspect of it included the concept of the Vedic Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu in *Pāñcarātra* school, the religion of *Satvatas* and finally the religion of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma.[4] The cult of *Bhāgavatas* came to accept Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa as its supreme deity, while the *Pāñcarātra* followers worshipped four *Vyūhas*, namely, Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.[5] This development in the region subsequently led to the introduction of a sizable number of Vaikuṇṭha images in Kashmir. In fact, Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha were heroes belonging to Vṛṣṇi race,[6] who, later on, got deified and incorporated in the cosmological speculation of the Sāṁkhya system, being a dominant system of the period.

As is well known, Kashmir was deeply impressed by the *Pāñcarātra* school of Vaiṣṇavism. It left a deep impact on the minds of the people to

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the extent that it shaped their religious behaviour and also invested them with new horizons of philosophical thinking. Kashmir has been regarded as a cradle of early *Pāñcarātra* literature dealing mainly with Viṣṇu and his *vyūhas*. J.C. Chatterji had noted[7] that some Vaiṣṇava works had very strong influence upon the general public of Kashmir which is proved by the fact that a great Śaiva philosopher Abhinavagupta had to present the tenets of Śaiva philosophy in the garb of a Vaiṣṇavite treatise, *Paramārtha Sār. Pāñcarātra* school in general has laid emphasis on *Jñāna, Yoga, Kriya* and *Charyā*.[8] *Jñāna* comprises philosophical doctrines in respect of God, nature and individual soul, the process of creation, the modes of liberation. *Yoga* purports meditation and concentration with a view to obtaining release from the shackles of body and mind. *Kriya* stresses the rules to be adhered to in the making of idols and in the construction of temples. *Charyā* deals with the rules of conduct regarding rites, worship, festivals and social obligations. The major works of *Pāñcarātra* contain an admixture of philosophy and occultism, mysticism and magic, rituals and ethics. The *Pāñcarātra* philosophy in the Nārāyaṇīya is free from abstruse and mysterious tangles, it has assumed a vast dimension in the *Pāñcarātra Saṁhitās*.[9] The ritualistic elements as dilated upon in the Nārāyaṇīya are brāhmaṇical in form and content. But the thought pattern that seems to emerge out of it is a medley of Upaniṣadic monism, Sāṁkhya dualist tendency, yogic mysticism stressing the worship of a personal God with absolute devotion. The essential concerns of the *Pāñcarātra* school in *Saṁhitās* has been that of *Sādhanā* as a means to lead a devotee onto the path of ascension. It is none of the concerns of this school in *Saṁhitās* to weave a web of definite philosophy involving metaphysical speculation.

Vaiṣṇavism being the main focus of the present work needs a deeper probe so as to trace its impact on creative minds of Kashmir responsible for giving a new direction to the pattern of thinking, artistic activities and religious modes of worship. It is difficult to establish the precise time period when Vaiṣṇavism got introduced into Kashmir and evolutionary process it must have undergone. There are scholars who hold that Vaiṣṇavism as a religious creed and cult was quite popular in Kashmir in the 6th century A.D. The epigraphical evidences which are available also establish the flourishing state of Vaiṣṇavism in the valley. A stone-slab was discovered from a private house in Srinagar containing references to the brāhmaṇical images like Gaurī, Kārttikeya, Gaṇapati, Āditya and Kṛṣṇa. The slab carries the date of 68 of the Laukika era. Another such inscription discovered from Pratapapur (modern Tapar),[10] a place 47 km to the south-west of Srinagar, records the consecration of something not distinct (perhaps refers to a temple), mentioning a devotee of Viṣṇu. Sten Konow found an inscription[11] 'I worship Janārdana' engraved on the base of a huge Viṣṇu image. This inscription had been reported from Bijbehara.

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The concept of incarnation has been vital to the entire creed of Vaiṣṇavism. Among various Viṣṇu incarnations, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, Hayagriva and Vāmana-Trivikrama were quite popular in Kashmir. The text of *Nilamata* has variously described the aspects of Viṣṇu including those of *Cakradhara* and *Yogāsana*. Kashmir has been known as Śāradāpīṭha from its ancient past. It is interesting to point out that Śāradā is one of the consorts of Viṣṇu and the nomenclature of Kashmir as Śāradāpīṭha owes its origin to predominance of Vaiṣṇavite faith and religion. Kashmir has its own version of *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which stands preserved in Goetingen Museum Library in Germany. It is the oldest and authentic version whose date can be fixed as 14th century A.D.[12] The manuscript contains many ślokas drawn from other earlier manuscripts. Kashmiri Pandits known for their learning and erudition have interpreted the *Bhāgavatagītā* from their own angle of vision. Such interpretations in the form of commentaries are novel in content and incisive in understanding. Kashmir as per the *Nilamata* text was inhabited by Nāgas and Paiśācas. The Nāgas had their own cult, which was so pervasive as to leave its traces of impact on the Vaiṣṇava cult of worship. The Vaiṣṇava thought-current was in no way abhorrent to the acceptance and absorption of influences from Nāgas. In fact, the history of Vaiṣṇavism in Kashmir is that of absorption and assimilation of all influences from the soil of Kashmir. The nāga is taken as a vehicle of Viṣṇu and *Śeṣaśāyī* Viṣṇu as conceived in Kashmir had its local traces mixed up with outside influences. Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, is the personification of snake and Ananta incarnated in human form. As per *Nilamata Purāṇa* (v. 69), it was Viṣṇu who anointed the Nāga king Nila as the chief of the Nāga-cult in Kashmir. It also says that in India the cults of Nāgas, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Buddha flourished and thrived side by side and each cult without obstruction and abhorrence received inspiration from the other in a pure spirit of give and take. Each cult is respectful of the gods and divinities of the other cult.

The antiquity of the tradition of Viṣṇu worship in Kashmir is further established by the names of some mountains, lakes and places in and around Kashmir indicating Vaiṣṇava connections. Lakes bearing names like Viṣṇasar and Kṛṣṇasar are visibly connected with Viṣṇu.[13] Anantnag is the place-name directly connected with Ananta, which is the mount of Viṣṇu. Also Balarāma the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa is the personification of snake and he is Ananta incarnated in human form. The words like Cakreśvara, Viṣṇupada, Ramardhan and Cakradhar (modern Chakdar) are undoubtedly carrying Vaiṣṇava import in them.

There are numerous textual allusions to indicate that many kings and queens of Kashmir were the disciples of the Vaiṣṇava creed. These kings

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and queens were responsible to a large extent for propagating and patronising the sect. Kalhaṇa (1148-50 A.D.) refers to queen Ranarambha, who had persuaded her husband Ranaditya to convert a Śaiva temple into a Vaiṣṇavite shrine.[14] Jayant Bhatt in his *Agamadmara* refers to Ranasvamin temple of Viṣṇu.[15] During the domain of Kārkotas both kings and nobles in the corridors of power patronised the erection of Viṣṇu temples. Kings Durlabhavardhana, Candrapīḍa, Lalitāditya, Jayapīḍa and queens Kamalavati and Amritaprabhā are known to have patronised the construction of Viṣṇu temples.[16] The *Rājataraṅgiṇī* unequivocally informs of the construction of two Vaiṣṇavite temples during the regime of king Lalitāditya.[17] At Buniyar a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu is still standing perceptibly bearing all the characteristics of Vaiṣṇavite temples (Fig. 61). As per Sahni, the temple can be dated to 8th century A.D.

The popularity of Vaiṣṇavism touched its new pinnacle of glory in the times of Utpapa dynasty (855-1003 A.D.). Avantivarman, a scion of the dynasty, was a devout disciple of Viṣṇu and is credited with erecting a temple of Viṣṇu called Avantisvāmin (Fig. 63). His minister, Suyya, founded a Viṣṇu temple called Hṛṣikeśa Yogasayin.[18] The period ranging between 8th and 9th centuries witnessed the production of a number of sculptures carrying Vaiṣṇava motifs and themes. Bijbehara, Amarkot, Devasar, Avantipur and Varanāg are some such sites as have yielded a number of sculptures imprinted with Vaiṣṇava subjects. Queen Sugandha and her daughter-in-law were for all-out support for the propagation of the Vaiṣṇava creed and cult. They were responsible for the building of Gopālakeśava and Nandikeśava temples respectively.[19] Meruvardhanasvami, the minister of king Partha, Yasaskara, Parvagupta, Bhatta Phalguna and a Śahi king Bhīma and queen Didda are known to have played their role in the domain of Viṣṇu temple construction.[20] Vaiṣṇavism as per the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* received a setback at the hands of king Harṣa, whom Kalhaṇa calls 'deranged' and 'turukṣa'. But, his successor, Uccala, tried to rejuvenate the creed.[21] The glory of Vaiṣṇavism in Kashmir came to an end with the spread of Islam by a few kings,[22] who were bigoted and over-zealous to boost up the new faith.

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17. *Ibid.*, Vol. iv.v, verses 272-74.
18. *Ibid.*, v. 100.
19. *Ibid.*, vv. 244-45.
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Viṣṇu

Vaiṣṇavism in India as a thought-process had undergone a number of changes before it attained its apogee by way of becoming a full-fledged thought-structure. It assimilated various cults and thought-currents in the process of its evolutionary development and as a result of synthesis, it evolved into a new religious system buttressed by philosophical trends. Vaiṣṇavism as a religious system revolves round Viṣṇu, who as one important deity forms the Hindu Triad. In the *Vedas*, we do not find him as occupying a very important position in the hierarchy of gods as have been delineated anthropomorphically. There are just five hymns addressed to Viṣṇu in the *Rigveda*. It is in the *Rigveda*[1] only that Viṣṇu is depicted as taking three strides with the specific reference to his acquisition of heaven, atmosphere and earth. There are the scholars upholding the view that Viṣṇu was originally a Sun god.[2] When Sūrya attained a position in the pantheon of gods, it was conceived and regarded only as a manifestation of Viṣṇu. As expounded by Gonda, Viṣṇu represented the processes in vegetative growth and fertility at large.[3]

Viṣṇu comes to have a significant stature in the *Brāhmaṇas*[4] which inform us as to how he rose the scale of ascendance responsible for preservation of the world by incarnating himself with the sole purpose of protecting it from demons and other perilous forms of evil. Viṣṇu has also been identified with Āditya or Agni.[5] He this way retains his solar character.

In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (X.I) and the *Mahābhārata*,[6] Viṣṇu is identified as Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva. That the Vaiṣṇavite credo was quite popular prior to the beginning of the Christian era is established by Pāṇini's reference to the worshippers of Vāsudeva. Megasthenes has also made a mention of Herakles' worship thereby establishing the popularity of the Vaiṣṇava cult in the pre-Christian era.[7]

The *Purāṇas*[8]. fully establish the popularity of Vaiṣṇavism as they have depicted a myriad of myths, rituals and modes of worship connected with

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Viṣṇu as a supreme god. The *Nilamata Purāṇa* of Kashmir following the track furrowed by other *Purāṇas* has also upheld Viṣṇu as the supreme god and as such is eulogised and assigned a higher stature than that of Brahmā and Śiva.[9] Viṣṇu as per the text of *Nilamata Purāṇa* bears four arms, four faces and has lotus eyes, his overall complexion is that of a blue lotus or white snow. He is described as wearing white or yellow clothes, a crown studded with jewels and ear-rings. Coming to the attributes, the *Nilamata Purāṇa* makes a mention of conch, discus, club, lotus and bow. He is always waited upon by his weapons in human form and Garuḍa is described as his mount.[10] The text does not allude to any of the single-headed Viṣṇu images. But such images have been discovered from various art centres in Kashmir establishing the popularity of the *Bhāgavata* cult, which also falls within the ambience of Vaiṣṇavism in general. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (Book III, V.2-14) has given an elaborate depiction of Vāsudeva icons.

I

The popularity of Viṣṇu-cult in the valley of Kashmir is testified and well borne out by availability of such images in different parts of the valley including Bhawan, Bijbehara[11] and Verinag. An image of Viṣṇu (Fig. 3) is depicted on the wall of the Mārtaṇḍa temple at Bhawan.[12] The image as it stands now clearly doles out the impression of its having suffered and undergone ravages of time and weather. Verinag has yielded an image of Viṣṇu (Fig. 6) whose date can be fixed around 14th century A.D. Two Viṣṇu images (Figs. 1, 2) have been discovered from Bijbehara, a great centre of artistic and aesthetic activities in the early Kashmir and the same stand preserved in S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar. A tenth century image of Viṣṇu (Fig. 4) whose exact provenance is not properly known stands preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar. Kashmir has also reported Viṣṇu images in bronze establishing the use of metals in image-formation in addition to the commonly used stone as a sculptural material. The bronze image of Vāsudeva (Fig. 5) belonging to 9th century A.D. is one such image available in the precious Pan-Asian Collection. The image depicted in Fig. 4 is two-handed, while all other Viṣṇu images are of four-handed variety.

A four-handed image of Viṣṇu (Fig. 1) available in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar is made of grey schist. The lower right and left hands of the figure are mutilated, the image holds a lotus in its upper right hand and a conch-shell in its upper left hand. The legs of the figure are damaged down the knees and its face is broadly eroded. The contours of the body look study to some extent. The figure of Viṣṇu is also adorned with *vanamālā, upavīta,*

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necklace and ear-rings. The plastic quality of the image bears an impact of Guptan sculptural style.

The image of Viṣṇu (Fig. 2) from Bijbehara is made of grey limestone. The image though considerably damaged is seen standing in *tribhaṅga* posture. The hands and legs down the knees are mutilated. The image as such can be categorised as a Viṣṇu image for the reasons of its bearing a *vanamālā* waited upon by his two personified attributes of *Gadādevī* and *Cakrapuruṣa* on whose heads the right and the left palms of Viṣṇu seem to be gently placed. This image seems to have shaken off much of its sturdiness and bulk. Considerable attention seems to have been paid to the execution of the abdomen and the upper parts of the legs. The torso is given a realistic treatment. The face, the hair-style and the crown on the head betray typical features.

The Viṣṇu image (Fig. 3) as available on the external wall of the Mārtaṇḍa temple is relieved within a trefoil arched niche, again adjusted within pilaster and arch. The crude execution of the figure pinpoints the beginnings of the Kashmirian sculptural growth. The said image is four-handed with a lotus visible in one of his left hands. On the right side of the deity, his personified weapon *Gadādevī* stands depicted. The image as usual is adorned with a *vanamālā*. As the image is deeply eroded in its external details, it is not possible to make a comment upon its aesthetic value.

A four-handed Viṣṇu image in bronze is available in Pan-Asian Collection (Fig. 5). It is essentially Kashmirian in its motifs and execution standing gracefully in *abhaṅga* posture. It alludes to Vāsudeva aspect of Viṣṇu. The image as it is holds a lotus in its upper right hand and a conch-shell in its upper left hand. The lower right and left hands are placed on the heads of *Gadādevī* and *Cakrapuruṣa* respectively. The presence of *Cakrapuruṣa* and *Gadādevī* is a common feature relating to the standing images of Viṣṇu and *Caturmukha* Viṣṇu which have been reported from Kashmir till date. There are some available Viṣṇu images (Figs. 5 and 6) which have the bust of a female figure lying between the legs of the said deity. The female figure has been identified as *Bhūdevī* (Earth Goddess), not as a personified *āyudha*. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* also supports the same treatment given to *Bhūdevī* whenever she is to be depicted and delineated along with the Viṣṇu images.[13]

It will not be out of place to make a mention of four more Viṣṇu images acquired by the National Museum, New Delhi (N.M. Nos. 67.162, 67.155, 67.154, 67.147). The said images are also in a standing posture, belonging to four-handed variety under discussion. The image numbered 67.155 is executed in bronze while others are executed and carved in stone. These images have been dated between 8th and 9th century A.D.

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A.K. Coomaraswamy also has reported an image of Viṣṇu belonging to the same variety in the *Museum Journal*, University of Pennsylvania, XVII, March 1926, pp. 91-93. He holds that the image hails from Avantipur in Kashmir.

The Viṣṇu images discovered from Verinag in Kashmir belonging to the fourteenth century A.D. are a pointer to the popularity of Vaiṣṇavism in Kashmir even as late as this period. A reference may be made to an image of Viṣṇu (Fig. 6) which bears the same attributes as are usually found in most of the Viṣṇu images of the same type hailing from Kashmir. It is adorned with three-pointed tiara commonly found in many images of Vaikuṇṭha hailing from Kashmir. Stylistically, this image does not possess the finesse of execution as is the case with the earlier images of the same type and variety, perhaps pointing to the disturbed and chaotic political and social conditions prevailing in Kashmir during this period of history.

The images of four-handed variety as have been already discussed bear almost the same iconographical features. The texts prescribe certain uncommon features regarding the Viṣṇu image formation. What is of interest to note is that the Kashmirian artists did not accept those uncommon features to be executed and depicted in regard to such Viṣṇu images. The *Harivaṁśa* describing the attributes of Viṣṇu images makes a mention of bow, disc, mace with bell and sword.[14] The *Bṛhad Brahma Saṁhitā* has prescribed sword, plough, conch and disc as the attributes of Viṣṇu images.[15] The *Sāttvata Saṁhitā*, on the other hand, makes a mention of plough, disc, pestle and mace to be held by Viṣṇu in his four hands.[16] But, in Viṣṇu images of Kashmir what is discernible is that Viṣṇu in his upper right and left hands is holding a lotus and a conch-shell and his lower right and left hands are placed on the heads of *Gadādevī* and *Cakrapuruṣa* respectively.

II

Kashmir has also unearthed a two-handed standing Viṣṇu image which is available in the precious collection of S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar (Fig. 4). The two legs of the said image from the middle of the thighs are missing. It is typically Kashmirian in respect of its style as it bears a three-pronged crown. It also bears another characteristic, that is, it is fitted with a small dagger on the right side of the waist. The image carries a lotus and a conch-shell in its two hands and the *vanamālā* is badly bruised. The upper portion of the figure is all bare while its lower portion is draped in a short loin-cloth. Its countenance is plump and fleshy while its shoulders are heavy. Viṣṇu is thick-set and heavy. The *Mahābhārata* also makes a refer-

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ence to the two-handed variety of Viṣṇu images. In it we find Nārāyaṇa being described as carrying a disc and a mace.[17] The same type of image is also described in the *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*, which describes Viṣṇu in *abhaya mudrā* by his right hand and a conch-shell in the left hand.[18] The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*,[19] the *Matsya Purāṇa*[20] and the *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*[21] go to suggest that the Viṣṇu images could be made two-handed. The two-handed Viṣṇu image can safely lead us to infer that its execution at the hands of Kashmirian artists was somewhat singular in the sense that it did not seriously follow the textual prescriptions in this behalf.

III

Kashmir has also interestingly made available a unique eight-handed Viṣṇu image belonging to tenth century. It is in a private collection in Srinagar.[22] The deity is seated in European style (*pralambapadāsana*) and between his two feet *Bhūdevī* is shown emerging from the earth. The image is holding a conch-shell by its upper right and left hands while it is holding perhaps two figures of Madhu and Kaiṭabha (two demons) by its lower right and left hands causing them to bulge their eyes out. The deity in his two middle right hands is carrying the orb of sun and arrow, while in his other two middle left hands he is holding the orb of moon and bow respectively. The two demons as they are perceptible in the figure are not firmly set as one foot in each case is touching the earth and the other foot is shown hanging thereby exhibiting the agony they are in. In any case the two demons do not form the personified *āyudhas* of Viṣṇu, who can never be shown suffering from pain. The orb of sun and the orb of moon are two peculiar symbols incorporated in the Kashmirian sculpture as they do not find any mention in any of the texts relating to the subject. But, the evidence gleaned from the *Nilamata Purāṇa* amply suggests that the sun and moon worship was prevalent in Kashmir from early times.[23] Hence the incorporation of these two attributes in the Kashmir sculpture is amply clear.

The legend of Viṣṇu killing Madhu and Kaiṭabha has found mention in different *Purāṇas*. There are some *Purāṇas* which establish that the two demons were born of the dirt of Viṣṇu's ears. Yet there are others which describe their genesis from *rajas* and *tamas*. The *Devi Bhāgavata Purāṇa* gives a somewhat different version when it describes that the two demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha, residing in waters stole the *Vedas* the moment Brahmā started reciting them. Perturbed at this, Brahmā made a request to Viṣṇu to retrieve the *Vedas* from the demons by confronting them. The two demons deft and clever as they were in handling their enemy in Viṣṇu

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made Viṣṇu to lose his battle against them. Disturbed at this, Viṣṇu made a prayer to the goddess to invest him with a clue enabling his to kill the two demons. Invested with the clue, Viṣṇu killed both of them through guile even though the demons had the boon of dying at will. The *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā* has a different version to relate. According to it, Viṣṇu after tracing these demons disappeared and then caught hold of them and killed them on his thighs. Viṣṇu was aware that they could be killed anywhere except water. Viṣṇu elongated his thighs over the water, caught hold of them, laid them on his two thighs and killed them by chopping off their heads with *Cakra*.[24] There is also a reference available in the *Nilamata Purāṇa*[25] regarding the killing of the two demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

The famous Devasar Viṣṇu frame (Fig. 11) carries a relief depicting the theme of Viṣṇu killing the two demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha (Fig. 7). The said relief delineates Viṣṇu holding the two demons by their neck by his lower right and left hands and dragging them on to his thighs. The two usual attributes of Viṣṇu being lotus and conch-shell are also held by his upper two hands. The relief of great aesthetic significance as it has a nice mould highlighting the forceful movement of Viṣṇu by way of pulling the two demons on to his thighs. The image looks well-proportioned and its beauty is enhanced by the three-crescent crown, a necklace, an *upavīta*, a *vanamālā* and a *śrīvatsa* mark on his chest. The *dhoti* held by an ornamental belt drapes the lower parts of the body. The image is rare and exemplary as the artist has stuck to the textual injunctions.

IV

Besides the above varieties of Viṣṇu images, we also have Viṣṇu images seated on his mount, Garuḍa. The present scholar has been able to trace some such images which in themselves form a new addition to the Viṣṇu images at large. One such early image is that of Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu in bronze, dated 9th century A.D. and stands preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi (N.M. No. 67.148). Another image hailing from Dhumatbhal (Anantnag district) has eluded the present scholar in establishing its present location. The said image belongs to 11th century A.D. (Fig. 8). Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple at Bulbul Lankar in Srinagar (Fig. 9) also retains such a Viṣṇu-image mounted on his vehicle Garuḍa. All such images are invested with his usual four attributes of conch-shell, discus, mace and lotus. The Garuḍa in the National Museum and Dhumatbhal images is invested with four hands, the normal two hands being brought near the chest supporting a water-pot and the second pair supporting the deity's feet. But, the details of Garuḍa from Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple are blurred and hence can-

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not be dilated upon. What is perceptible is only a water-pot near the chest of the Garuḍa probably holding it by his two normal hands. The image is flanked by two tiny female figurines possibly representing the two *śaktis* of the deity. It is safe to suggest that this Viṣṇu image has a peculiar arrangement in terms of iconography. In the National Museum image, the deity has a halo behind his head giving the impression that the halo is formed by the two horns of a bull. The Viṣṇu images seated on Garuḍa have been referred to in the *Mahābhārata.*[26] The *Harivaṁśa* also contains as allusion to such images delineating the attributes of four-handed Viṣṇu mounted on his vehicle, Garuḍa.[27]

V

Viṣṇu seated in *padmāsana* or *yogāsana* displaying *dhyāna mudrā* or *yogamudrā* has been a favourite theme for the Kashmirian artists to dilate upon. Viṣṇu images find detailed depiction in the *Caturvargacintamani* (II, 114). The *Mahābhārata* has also recorded in a passage the visit of Nārada to Badrikāśrama to see Nara and Nārāyaṇa. To the consternation of Nārada, he found Nārāyaṇa in deep meditation when he believed that he as a deity is worshipped in the same pose by humans. He on query was satisfied only to learn about the deity's object of worship that was *prakṛti*—the primordial source of this mundane world. The yogis meditated upon this form of Viṣṇu for purposes of ascension and ultimate release.

The world-famous Devasar frame (Anantnag district) (Fig. 11) has a relief depicting Viṣṇu in *yogāsana* with his usual four hands (Fig. 10). Viṣṇu is seen sitting on a double lotus in the centre of an arched band. His upper two hands are raised to the level of shoulders, but are empty. His remaining two hands are placed in his lap in the posture of *dhyāna mudrā* with no crown on his head. His matted hair makes him put on an appearance of ascetics. Adorned as the image is with a necklace, he also retains a mark of *śrīvatsa* on his chest. In addition, Viṣṇu in this frame is invested with his usual attribute of *upavīta* (a sacred thread). Curiously, a kneeling figure of Garuḍa invested with three-pronged tiara and with his hands held in *namaskāra mudrā* is depicted on the right side of Viṣṇu. It appears that the sculptor was well aware of the textual prescriptions in regard to such image-formation.[28] The deity does not have attributes like conch-shell and discus in his hands, which are quite empty. Its creativity lies in adhering to the prescriptions and not in deviating from them.

Above the said relief (Fig. 10) we find two figures of the sun and moon gods dressed in jacket-like armour and tall boots. The moon-god in particular is holding a staff topped by a half-crescent moon in his left hand

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while his right hand is raised after the fashion of the sun-god. The sun-god holds something in his right hand but it is not identifiable.

It will not be out of place to mention here that the sun-god and moon-god worship was in vogue in ancient Kashmir. The same fact is amply testified by the *Nīlamata Purāṇa*, which describes that the sun god and the moon god constructed their hermitages near the Mahadeva peak after the demon Jalodbhava was slain by Viṣṇu.[29] The same text is replete with references to the *Chandravidakarna* and *Arkamsakarna* establishing the sun and moon worship and also the places specially meant for the sun worship.[30] That the king Suchandra constructed an image of Chandra during the early period of Kashmir history is also mentioned in the same text.[31] The main object of the sun and the moon worship was to ward off evil.

Just behind the row of sun and moon gods are seen two figures presumably identifiable as Ṛṣi Bhrigu and Mārkaṇḍeya. The two figures are seated in *namaskāra mudrā* with their hair matted after the fashion of ascetics. The huddling together of the main dominating deity with many other smaller deities and ṛṣis is strictly in consonance with the textual prescriptions.[32]

It will be vital to the entire discussion of Viṣṇu and his various iconographical representations if a reference is made to the temple remains belonging to the 8th century A.D. at Andrakot (Jayapidapur), where four-handed Viṣṇu is seated on a cushioned throne technically called as *lalitāsana.*[33] The relief depicts an attendant probably a female standing on his left. The left foot of the deity rests upon a footstool. His upper left hand is holding a mace, while his lower hand is in *abhaya mudrā.* The details pertaining to rest of the hands are indistinct. The deity is abundantly ornamented and is decked with a garland of celestial flowers. A distinct figure of an atlant and some other indistinct figures are perceptible under the throne. The relief on the front panel contains a cluster of three figures and Viṣṇu as the prominent deity is seated between his two consorts, Lakṣmī and Bhūmī. Bühler has identified the temple ruins at the western corner of the site at Andrakot as a temple of Keśava.

VI

The concept of triad in the brāhmaṇical pantheon is of vital significance and it could not but leave its imprint on all sorts of artistic activities including sculpture. The *Nīlamata Purāṇa* as such records in unambiguous terms the triad of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva with their specific roles of creation, preservation and destruction. A mere glance over the pages of the *Nīlamata Purāṇa* convinces a reader that the text has a Vaiṣṇavite bias

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which becomes amply clear when Viṣṇu is elevated to a supreme position with Brahmā and Śiva as his two aspects.[34] The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* and *Nilamata Purāṇa* are in complete agreement in establishing Brahmā as *sāttvic*, Śiva as *tāmasic* and Viṣṇu as *rājasic* beings in regard to their essential temperamental moods. With the impact of such notions on the image formations, Brahmā is presented as an ascetic, Viṣṇu as a prince and Śiva in his *liṅga* form symbolising the material aspect.

The Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi houses a small *mukhaliṅga*[35] flanked on the right side by a seated figure of Brahmā and on the left side presumably by a figure of Viṣṇu which is not identifiable because of having suffered total mutilation. This is how this panel conceives a brāhmaṇical triad. Unique as the composition is, the figure of Brahmā in a sitting posture perceptibly retains the Gandharan features and the Śiva face on the *liṅga* with its arrangement of hair exhibits the assimilation of certain local features and influences.

P. Pal has also reported an interesting bronze from Kashmir depicting the three figures of the brāhmaṇical triad.[36] The said image belonging to the 10th century A.D. stands preserved in the collection of Spink and Son Ltd., London. The three deities forming the triad riding their respective vehicles are seen in this image with their consorts seated on their left thighs. This sort of combination by all standards is rare. Each couple in this composition is framed by a body aureole and a nimbus. The main stress is lavished on four-handed Viṣṇu, who is elaborately crowned and also ornamented holding in his hands the usual attributes of lotus, mace, conch and wheel or discus. The chest of Viṣṇu is marked by *śrīvatsa* sign. His vehicle Garuḍa is half-human and half-avian displaying *namaskāra mudrā*. Lakṣmī, Viṣṇu's consort, is holding a staff and a stem probably that of a lotus. The depiction and execution of the brāhmaṇical triad especially in bronze is a rarity and as such this composition has to be rated as extraordinary. P. Pal is also credited with the fact of having reported another triad in stone[37] from Kashmir in which the three deities are given equal treatment with the exception of Śiva being represented in his phallic form.

VII

A unique fragment of back stela (*prabhāmaṇḍala*) in brass yielded from Devasara[38] (Anantnag district) stands preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar (Fig. 11). The outline of the back stela bears a close resemblance to the curvilinear towers in Northern India with their finial. The frame flat as it is incorporates within its ornamental edges a meandering lotus stalk.

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Within the wavy twists of the stalk stand depicted various aspects of Viṣṇu (these aspects will be elaborately discussed in separate sections). The mould of the back stela is solid and the figures in it are executed with finesse. The main image depicted against this frame (*prabhāmaṇḍala*) is missing yet the overall executional impression of the total frame convinces one that it must have been no other deity but Viṣṇu. A plethora of dates have been advanced for purposes of fixing the date of the back stela reducing it almost to the level of a controversy. According to Barrett,[39] the frame can be placed in 900 A.D. As per H. Goetz[40] and P. Pal,[41] the frame can be dated in the 10th century A.D. on the basis of its style. To the present scholar, the date fixed for the frame by Goetz and Pal seems to be correct.[42]

VIII

The concept of Nārāyaṇa as the Lord of waters and his affiliation with Śeṣa is recorded by the *Mahābhārata*.[43] That he reclines on the coils of the serpent has also found mention in the same text.[44] It is a matter of general belief that Viṣṇu assumed the form of Śeṣa-Nārāyaṇa at the end of *Mahāpralaya* (universal dissolution). As per the version of the *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā*, Bhagavana as an overtowering Lord before the creation of the universe created Brahmā out of his own navel and in this he was urged by his own sovereign will.[45] The *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, a magnum opus of Kashmir history, records *śeṣaśāyī* as *'chaturātmā cha śeṣaśāyī cha Keśavaḥ'*.[46]

A rare image of *Anantaśāyī* Viṣṇu (Fig. 12) has been discovered from Dhumatbhal (Anantnag district). Its present location is not known. The image stands carved in stone after the normal iconographical prescriptions. Viṣṇu in this image is shown reclining on the seven-hooded snake (also known as Śeṣa) spreading its hoods to form a canopy. A stalk of lotus issuing out of Viṣṇu's navel forms the seat for Brahmā. According to Sāṁkhya form of Indian thought, Ananta represents *prakṛti* (primordial form of nature), Viṣṇu denotes *buddhi* (intelligence) and Brahmā symbolises *ahaṅkāra* (ego). A female figurine in a kneeling posture stands by the side of Viṣṇu's feet. She is actually Lakṣmī, the female consort of Viṣṇu, who is shown massaging the legs of her lord. Viṣṇu in this image is endowed with some unique features. He is multi-handed, his one leg is in *laksamutsargagata* pose and the other is in *śeṣabhakangata*. One hand of Viṣṇu is shown placed on his thigh and the other hand is placed below his head obviously supporting it. There is also another figure between Brahmā and Lakṣmī, but the same is eroded beyond recognition..The present author can venture to identify it as Madhu or Kaiṭabha. What is highly interesting about this image is that the body of Śeṣa is carved in four registers, schematically arranged one over the other to form the bed for Nārāyaṇa.

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Another image (Fig. 13) in bronze depicting the same leitmotif has been discovered from Devasar frame (Fig. 11). Like the Dhumatbhal image, this image also exhibits a stalk of a lotus issuing out of Viṣṇu's navel supporting Brahmā. The two demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha, are shown making an attempt to seize the lotus-stalk thereby threatening to disturb the process of creation. Viṣṇu in this figure also has spread out his entire body on the seven-hooded Śeṣa and is supporting his head with upper right hand and the lower right hand is in *kaṭaka mudrā* and his other two hands are empty. Brahmā seated on the lotus-stalk is four-handed and one of his right hands is displaying *abhaya mudrā*. It will not be out of place to mention that Lakṣmī as the female consort of Viṣṇu has not been depicted and as such is missing. The entire relief in its totality is executed with all dexterity and can be rated as one of the excellent sculptures yielded so far from the vale of Kashmir.

The third image belonging to the same category is, perhaps, the one which is described by Kalhaṇa in his *Rājataraṅgiṇī*.[47] Here an allusion has been made to a statue which was worshipped in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple at Andrakot (Jayapidapur) and the statue was that of *Śeṣaśāyī* Viṣṇu.

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9. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 139.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.
11. The modern city of Vijabror (Bijbehara) owes its origin to Vijayeśvara. In 2nd century B.C., a king of the name of Vijaya had founded this city, whichever the year. It became a great centre of culture and learning. The famous temple at the site of Vijabror was demolished by Sikandar, the iconoclast, a bigoted king as per Jonaraja in his 2nd Rājataraṅgiṇī. A number of sculptures precious from iconographical point of view have been recovered from various sites at Bijbehara. These sculptures are indicative of ancient characteristics imbibed from the Gandhara and Mathura schools of art

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[for details see Malla, B.L., *Sculptures of Kashmir (600-1200 A.D.)*, Delhi, 1990, pp. 60-63].

12. Ancient Mārtaṇḍa, which overlooks the modern village of Matan (also called Bhavan), is situated on the lofty plateau in Anantnag district. The city of Mārtaṇḍa derived its name from the presiding deity of the place, Mārtaṇḍa, the Sun-god. Next to Konarka, Mārtaṇḍa was probably the most monumental temple complex dedicated to Sun-god. The temple was raised by King Lalitāditya in the eighth century A.D. The images that are found carved on the walls of the Mārtaṇḍa temple are regarded as examples of typical Kashmir sculptures.
13. Shah, U.P. (Ed.), *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Baroda, 1961, III, Adhyaya 85, verses 2-6.
14. *Harivaṁśa*, III, 32, 36-37.
15. *Bṛhad Brahma Saṁhitā*, Anandasrama Sanskrit Series 13, 65.
16. Chariar, P.B.A. (Ed.), *Sāttvata Saṁhitā*, Kanchi, 1902, XII, 42-43.
17. Sukthankar, V.S., *op. cit.*, I, 58, 49.
18. Sastri, V.S. (Tr.), *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*, Bangalore, 1947, LVIII, 35.
19. Shah, U.P. (Ed.), *op. cit.*, III, 60, 2.
20. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, Poona, 1907, 258, 6.
21. *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, Baroda, 1925, 77, 40.
22. The present scholar was able to study this image through a photograph lying in the photo archives of American Institute of Indian Studies, Ramnagar, Varanasi.
23. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 51, 67, 171.
24. *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā*, II, p. 24.
25. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 153.
26. *Mahābhārata*, I, 29, 16.
27. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 99, 11.
28. It is distinctly mentioned in some iconographical texts that conch and discus should not be placed in the hands of Yogāsana Viṣṇu (cf. Rao, T.A. Gopinatha, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1968, Second Edition, p. 41.
29. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 51.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
31. *Ibid.*, V, 1009.
32. Rao, T.A. Gopinatha, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 20, 85.
33. Sahni, D.R., 'Pre-Muhammadan Monuments of Kashmir', *Archaeological Survey of India* (Annual Report), 1915-16, p. 66, pl. XLIII, a.
34. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 139.
35. Malla, B.L., *op. cit.*, pl. 10.
36. Pal, P., *Bronzes of Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1975, p. 52, pl. 2.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
38. Devasara (modern Devasar) is situated near Kulgam (Anantnag district) and is often mentioned in *Rājataraṅgiṇī* and other chronicles. Devasar had played an important role in the feudal wars of Damaras with feudal lords during ancient times.

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39. Barrett, D., 'Bronzes from North West India and Western Pakistan', *Lalit Kala*, No. 11, April 1962, pp. 35-44.
40. For reasons unknown, H. Goetz has identified the Devasar Viṣṇu frame as 'Sankaravarman's frame for an image of Buddha Avatara' (see Goetz, H., 'A masterpiece of mediaeval Kashmir metal art', *Journal of Asiatic Society, Letters*, Vol. XIX, 1953, pp. 45-55).
41. Pal, P., *op. cit.*, p. 70.
42. J.L. Bhan has wrongly dated Devasar metal frame in the eighth century [cf. Parimoo, R. (Ed.), *Vaiṣṇavism in Indian Art and Culture*, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 390-91].
43. *Mahābhārata*, III, 194, 8-15.
44. *Ibid.*, XII, 47, 48.
45. *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā* (Ed. B. Bhattacharya), Baroda, 1931, II, 34-36.
46. Cf. Parimoo, R. (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 367.
47. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, IV, v. 508.

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3

Vaikuṇṭha-Caturmūrti

The etymology of the word Vaikuṇṭha is derivable from *vi-kuṇṭha* meaning 'sharp' or 'not blunt'. The earliest references available in regard to him do not associate him with Viṣṇu. As per the *Rig Veda*,[1] Indra-Vaikuṇṭha is the name of one who composed certain hymns. But the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads* are clear in the matter of describing Vaikuṇṭha as an epithet of Indra.[2] In the *Purāṇas* and the epics Vaikuṇṭha invariably signifies Viṣṇu. According to Macdonell, Indra and Viṣṇu are closely allied.[3] That Hari took the form of Vaikuṇṭha, the terminator of blunt, is what stands mentioned in the text of the *Mahābhārata*.[4] The Viṣṇu-Vaikuṇṭha form is described in the above text as *'mūrticatuṣṭaya'*.[5] Viṣṇu is described as Vaikuṇṭha many a time in the *Mahābhārata*. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* records that Hari himself was born of Vaikuṇṭha by his own volition.[6] The *Nilamata Purāṇa* holds Viṣṇu as the supreme god in Kashmir.[7] The same idea is echoed in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, which describes Kashmir as the seat of Viṣṇu as *Cakrin*.[8] The *Nilamata Purāṇa* holds that Viṣṇu *caturānana* aspect was popular and well-circulated in Kashmir. In addition to many philosophical creeds, Kashmir was well-acquainted with the early *Pāñcarātra* literature propagating Viṣṇu and his multiple forms (*Vyūhas*).[9] The text of *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā* dated 5th century A.D. is the earliest text which alludes to *caturmukha* Viṣṇu in Kashmir.[10] It has mentioned Viṣṇu, who, in the company of Varāha, Nṛsiṁha and Kapila assisted by attendants, annihilated the asuras appearing before him in zoomorphic forms. The text also relates that the said asuras could be slain by a being capable of assuming Vaikuṇṭha forms. So, Viṣṇu with a view to achieving his end evolved four faces, namely, Vāsudeva, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha and Kapila. The same text prescribes that Vaikuṇṭha should hold a conch-shell, discus, mace and lotus by his four hands. It is safe to infer that this characteristic form of Viṣṇu combines his two aspects, *Vyūha* and *Vibhava*. The Nṛsiṁha and Varāha are the incarnations of Viṣṇu and Kapila is also an incarnation of Viṣṇu as per *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Pāñcarātra Saṁhitās*. A god in such

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form is shown not only bearing four faces, but also four hands thereby retaining the aspects of four-armed Vāsudeva. In case of Kapila, it need be said that he was a ṛṣi and subsequently was regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. He is the philosophical genius to devise the structure of Sāṁkhya thought.[11] According to J.N. Banerjea, the lion and the boar visages are primarily associated with *Pāñcarātra Vyūha* (form) and not with the Nṛsiṁha and Varāha incarnations, though the latter might have helped to some extent in the formation of this concept.[12] In the four-faced form of Viṣṇu, the central face in front is considered to be the face of Vāsudeva. The left visage is that of Varāha and the right denotes the face of Nṛsiṁha. At the back of each Vaikuṇṭha image, a terrific-looking Kapila's face is noticeable. Kapila as such is represented with matted locks, round protruding eyes and a lolling tongue.[13] The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (Bk. III, ch. 85, verses 2-41) elaborately describes different aspects of *Viṣṇu-Caturmūrti.* It is quite interesting to note that the said text alludes to the combination of all these aspects in one and nomenclatures it as Vaikuṇṭha. The central face is of vital significance. The lion-visage on the right symbolises lustre denoting knowledge. The face at the back symbolises prosperity. The fierce-looking Kapila appears to be a local inclusion not seen beyond Kashmir and adjoining areas with the single exception of an image from Varanasi.[14] The *Rājataraṅgiṇī* has also made a reference to such Vaikuṇṭha images as *caturātmana*[15] and their installation in various shrines.

The annals of the Kashmirian history establish that Kashmir as such was an important centre of *Pāñcarātra* school of Vaiṣṇavism. Those reposing faith in the cult worshipped four *vyūhas*, namely, Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. It is well-known that the *Pāñcarātra* cult was popular within the purlieu of Mathura and its adjoining areas during the period of the Guptas and with the passage of time it appears to have shifted to the hills of Kashmir and Punjab. It can be safely said that the images of Vaikuṇṭha were already known in Kashmir before Lalitāditya established his suzerainty over Kashmir. The possibility of the Gandharan and Mathuran impact on such images cannot be ruled out.[16] A reference in this behalf can be made to an interesting image of three-headed Viṣṇu from the Museum für Indische Kunst (Berlin).[17] The central head of this image appears to have left its impact on the Kashmirian artists impelling them to a new type of syncretism. The cults of lion and boar originally totemistic in character must have crept into Vaiṣṇavism, which certainly absorbed them and invested them with new meanings. Iconographically, the above image is unique in some of its aspects. The image has been designated as a Kashmirian work of art, yet there is room enough to raise objections regarding its actual provenance. In terms of style, the image has a considerable amount of

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late Gandharan impact. Therefore, it can be surmised that the image was either carved in Gandhara region and brought to Kashmir or it might have been sculpted in Kashmir incorporating Gandharan mannerisms prevalent during 4th-5th century A.D. The moustache, loin-cloth, lotus in the hands of Viṣṇu visibly carry Gandharan influence, which guided Pal to believe that the said image was a Gandharan product.[18] The Guptan influence also went a long way in shaping the overall texture of the image. The naturalistically conceived legs of *cakrapuruṣa* and a necklace with a single tiger-claw are in essentia Guptan in their form.

I

Here an attempt will be made to study a number of standing four-armed Vaikuṇṭha images including an image of Vaikuṇṭha in the National Museum, New Delhi,[19] dated 8th century A.D.; an image of Vaikuṇṭha from Avantipur (Figs. 9, 10), dated 9th century A.D., S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar; the one enshrined in Gadadhara temple,[20] Srinagar, dated 9th century A.D.; five Vaikuṇṭha images (Figs. 19-23) from Varanag (modern Verinag), S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar; and two broken busts of Vaikuṇṭha, one in a private collection, Srinagar, dated 9th century A.D. (Figs. 16, 17) and the other (Fig. 18) in the Viṣṇu temple at Pratapapur (modern Tapar, Baramula).

Iconographically, all the standing Vaikuṇṭha images recovered from Kashmir so far bear almost the same characteristic features. Each Vaikuṇṭha image is four-faced and four-armed and is adorned with a huge *vanamālā*, a *śrīvatsa* mark on chest and an *upavīta*. In the four hands of Vaikuṇṭha, one finds a fully blossomed lotus (*utphulla kamala*) in his upper right hand, while in his upper left hand he holds a conch-shell (*śaṅkha*). His other two hands are generally found placed on the heads of *cakrapuruṣa* on the left and *gadādevī* on the right. As is the case with most of the Vaikuṇṭha-*Caturmūrti* images in Kashmir, an image of *bhūdevī* is shown in between the legs of Viṣṇu as if she were emerging from the earth. Vaikuṇṭha images are usually seen adorned with three-pronged or three-crescent tiara and a dagger is always found tucked to the right side of the waist-belt of such images.

Of the earliest *caturānana* Viṣṇu images from Kashmir, one dated 8th century A.D., preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi is in bronze,[21] crudely moulded and crowned with an ornate headgear. The hair, crown, *vanamālā* and *āyudhapuruṣas* in the said image are lacking in finesse. The overcrowded jewellery impairs the overall beauty of the image. Multiple heads on a slender torso look somewhat heavy.

Avantivarman (855-883 A.D.) was one such king of Kashmir who

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patronised and provided a nisus to the creative artists busy in translating their dreamy feelings and ideas through the medium of stone. He built the important temple of Avantisvāmin at Avantipur. The walls of the temple are ornamented and relieved with numerous sculptures including that of the earthly god, Vaikuṇṭha.

In the times of Avantivarman, *Pāñcarātra* cult which had already gained much popularity in Kashmir left a strong imprint on the sculptural creations of the period. We have with us a huge sculptural repertoire including *caturānana* Vaikuṇṭha images of Viṣṇu, preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar (Figs. 14, 15). Such images have a potent torso and muscular body-frame with a massive shoulder. In comparison to the bust, the legs in the said images look slightly heavier. The figures are decked with a typical Kashmirian crown and a *vanamālā*. The condensation of muscles of the bosom and abdomen and also the right leg bearing the entire body weight is one of the features of the images of Vaikuṇṭha sculpted in this period. The images also have round faces instead of ovoid faces available in earlier specimens. It is important to note that ovoid face was a Guptan influence but round face seems a local engineering.

The Viṣṇu temple at Pratapapur (modern Tapar, Baramula) yielded a bust of Vaikuṇṭha (Fig. 18) revealing the sculptor's unique sense of proportion. The said image is crowned with *kīrtimukha*, a pair of ear pendants, a broad necklace and a *śrīvatsa* mark on the chest. The impression one gains from the totality of the bust is that of sublimity and softness.

That there was decline in the field of sculpture in Kashmir is reflected by the sculptural specimens belonging to the period of the late 11th century A.D. onwards. The sculptures lack in naturalistic modelling and are bereft of proportions. They have crudely treated surface and are monotonous, lacking in variety of form and content. Endowed with a huge crown, not fitting aptly with their countenances, the sculptures are static and frozen. During this period the artists essentially lacked in creativity which fact made them to lavish more attention on iconographical details than creation of real beauty in terms of aesthetics.

II

Kashmir has also yielded a six-handed Viṣṇu-*Caturvyūha* in standing posture (Fig. 24), dated 9th century A.D. Found in Varanag (modern Verinag, Anantnag), the image at the moment stands preserved in S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar. It was R.C. Agrawala who published the image for the first time in the *Lalit Kala*, No. 16, 1974, in his article 'Nṛsiṁha-Varāha-Viṣṇu images and some allied problems'. The image in the said article has been

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treated briefly and sketchily. It is not in any way treated in a manner that it could be differentiated from many other such Vaikuṇṭha images available from the region of Kashmir. The image has some unique and exceptional features. Flouting the iconographical prescriptions, the sculptor created the said image with six hands instead of the usual four or eight hands. The Kashmirian artists by and large have not adhered to the textual prescriptions in toto when they created the images of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī and Hari-Hara.

The said Vaikuṇṭha image preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar (Fig. 24) is shown carved against a *prabhāmaṇḍala*. Its crown is topped by a seven-hooded snake, again a rare phenomenon in Vaikuṇṭha images.[22] Out of six hands, the lower left hand is placed on the head of *cakrapuruṣa* topped by a single-hooded snake, which is a rare feature in such images. R.C. Agrawala has identified *cakrapuruṣa* as a *caurī*-bearer stressing the close affinity of the image as a whole with the image from Avantipur, Kashmir. In terms of iconography, the said valuation of the image is not in tune with the Avantipur image. The lower right hand and the middle left hand of this image stand mutilated, while the right middle hand is grasping a lotus depicting probably Lakṣmī in *padmāsana*. The attributes present in upper right and upper left hands are difficult to identify as these have suffered serious mutilation in their upper ends. The image of Vaikuṇṭha is adorned with a heavy *vanamālā* and a dagger is tucked to the right side of his waist-belt. The dagger attached to the waist is an additional feature of the Kashmirian sculptures. The image is further adorned with a necklace, upper bands, wristlets, *upavīta*, *kuṇḍalas* and waist-band firmly holding the short loin-cloth. The upper part of the body is kept exposed and has been shown quite muscular.

Since one of the attributes of Balarāma (Saṅkarṣaṇa) is a snake-hood, the above image also carries a snake-hood. In addition to this, the snake, Ananta, is also closely related to Viṣṇu as his mount; this feature takes it closer to the domain of Vaiṣṇava iconography. *Cakrapuruṣa*, as a personified attribute of Viṣṇu, is also invested with a snake-hood. Similarly the right hand showing the tiny image of Lakṣmī within the ambit of a lotus cannot be deemed unusual as she is regarded one of the consorts of Viṣṇu. In the absence of proper valuation of this image, it can be categorised as Viṣṇu-*Caturvyūha* combining the aspects of Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.

III

The images of Vaikuṇṭha seated on his mount Garuḍa are not unknown,

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but rare certainly they are. In Kashmir, we have some such images which are seated on the back of a Garuḍa. The textual references to such images do coincide though partially with the prescriptions that are there in the texts of *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā* and *Hemadri Caturvargacintamani.* According to *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa,* a Vaikuṇṭha wearing a *vanamālā* has to have eight hands and must be seated on a Garuḍa. His right hands must carry an arrow, a rosary and a club etc., and his left hands must grasp a shield, a towel (*cira*) and a bow.[23] After reflecting some changes the number of emblems got raised to eight. The right hands must have an arrow, a rosary, a club and a sword, while the left hands must carry a shield, a ploughshare, a bow and disc.[24]

From Kashmir, we have been able to discover some Vaikuṇṭha images seated on his vehicle, Garuḍa. One of these images (Fig. 27) has been discovered from Varanag (modern Verinag, Anantnag district) and is at present preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar. The other image in bronze is dated 10th-11th century A.D., preserved in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay (Figs. 25, 26). The whereabouts of the third one from Dhumatbhal (Fig. 28) are yet to be known. The images of Vaikuṇṭha recovered from Varanag and Dhumatbhal are holding a *cakra* and a *gadā* by their upper two hands. The remaining right hands hold a *padma* and the left hands grasp a conch-shell. K. Desai has wrongly identified a few attributes present in the Varanag image, *gadā* with sword and *padma* with mace. The Garuḍa in the Dhumatbhal image is two-handed. He carries the feet of the main deity by them. As against this, the Garuḍa in the Varanag image is four-handed. With his normal two hands, he is displaying *namaskāra mudrā* and with the remaining two hands, he is supporting the feet of Vaikuṇṭha. The image in the Prince of Wales Museum is also riding a four-handed Garuḍa, who with his two hands is supporting the feet of his lord and with his other two hands, he is carrying a water-pot. In this case, the image of Vaikuṇṭha is four-faced and four-armed. The emblems carried by him in his four hands are *gadā,* half-moon, conch and the other one not distinct. K. Desai has wrongly identified half-moon with disc and *gadā* (a typically stylised version of Kashmir) with sword. From a general study of these three Vaikuṇṭha images, one can safely aver that they are surrounded by four tiny female figures holding a lotus, seated on the serrated leaf-feathers of Garuḍa possibly symbolising four *śaktis* of the four-faced Viṣṇu. As per the text of *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā,* Vaikuṇṭha image is prescribed to be flanked by his two consorts only, Śrī and Bhūmī.[25] But, what is a characteristic innovation in the Kashmirian sculpture of this genre is that such images are flanked by four *śaktis,* which is not only an addition but a deviation from the prescriptive injunctions in this behalf.

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The Kashmirian Vaikuṇṭha images seated on Garuḍa (rare as they are) have enriched the total domain of Indian sculpture. The creative artists in their agonising efforts of innovatory character have lavished much of their attention on giving more of iconographical details rather than enhancing the aesthetic beauty of the total sculptural design and arrangement.

The other image of Garuḍārūḍha Vaikuṇṭha datable to c. eighth-ninth century stands reported by R.C. Agrawala,[26] which was brought to the National Museum. It has the face of Kapila depicted at the back. However, its interesting feature was an elaborate *parikara* consisting of attendant and *vyāla* figures, surmounted by a *kīrtimukha* at the top done quite elegantly. An inscription at the back ended with "*patu vo-Jagadīśvaraḥ*" (i.e., may god Jagadīśvara protect you) thus enjoining the epithet Jagadīśvara to Vaikuṇṭha.

IV

The images of Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu (having all forms) are also available from various regions of India. Not satisfied with the four-headed Vaikuṇṭha image, the sculptors endeavoured to synthesize all the possible concepts and forms of Viṣṇu into one form representing the hub of the universe. According to *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (Chapter 83), Viṣṇu is said to have two forms as Viśvarūpa, one is like the Vaikuṇṭha form, the other has numerous faces including those of Maheśvara and Brahmā and the other lowermost head is four-visaged.[27] The four faces (man, man-lion, Śrī and boar) of Viśvarūpa are identical with those of Vaikuṇṭha, but Viśvarūpa as twenty-armed is a description of Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu recorded in *Aprājita-prichchhā*.[28]

It appears that the Kashmirian sculptors were in full know of Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu as a theme. On the northern wall of the Mārtaṇḍa temple, there is a multi-headed image of Viṣṇu totally disfigured. After studying the old photographs of this relief, D. Mitra holds[29] that there is a pile of seven more heads above the man-lion-boar heads, two rows having three heads each with one head at the top. It can most probably be the Viśvarūpa form of Viṣṇu.

V

After presenting all available materials relating to Vaikuṇṭha images, it can be inferred that such images are either in standing posture or seated on Garuḍa. But, there are two images available sitting in *līlāsana* posture, which is a rare feature. The said two images (Figs. 29, 30) form a part of

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the Viṣṇu-frame from Devasar (Anantnag district). Both of them are four-armed, of course, varying in their attributes. In one image (Fig. 29) what is discernible is that its upper right hand is holding a lotus and the upper left hand is held above the shoulder (in *sūchī mudrā* ?) as if it were pointing at the Varāha-head. The remaining right hand is held in *varada mudrā*, while the other left hand stands mutilated. In regard to the second image (Fig. 30), the upper two hands are holding lotus and conch-shell respectively and of the other two hands, the right one perhaps is displaying *kaṭaka mudrā*, while the left one is in a state of mutilation. In both the cases, Vaikuṇṭha is putting on a triple moon-crescent crown and a lotus stands emerging from the top of it. A beaded necklace, armlets, wristlets, a pair of *padmakuṇḍalas* and a *vanamālā* are there to refurbish the beauty of the deity. It is really interesting to see in one of the two images (Fig. 29) a small four-armed seated figure on the right side of the Vaikuṇṭha. H. Goetz identified this figure as a priest.[30] But, in reality, the said figure represents Brahmā on the basis of its being four-armed, holding in its upper right hand the *akṣamālā* while its upper left hand is not visible. The remaining two hands are in *namaskāra mudrā*. The hair of the figure is held in *jaṭābhāra* befitting a *muni* (ascetic).

The second image of Vaikuṇṭha (Fig. 30) seated in *līlāsana* is in no way less important from the viewpoint of iconography. In this image we find a seated lady, most probably Lakṣmī, in *namaskāra mudrā* on the left side of the Vaikuṇṭha. H. Goetz[31] has identified this figure as the spouse of king Śankaravarman.

References

1. *Rig Veda*, X, 47-50; cf. Desai, K., *Iconography of Viṣṇu* (in Northern India, upto the Mediaeval period), New Delhi, 1973, p. 37.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
3. Macdonell, A.A., *Vedic Mythology*, Benares, 1963, p. 39.
4. *Mahābhārata*, vi, 775, 15.
5. *Ibid.*, XII, 326, 43.
6. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, III, 1, 41.
7. Kumari, Ved, *The Nilamata Purāṇa*, Vol. I, Jammu, 1968, p. 41.
8. Shah, U.P. (Ed.), *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Baroda, 1961, Adhyaya 125, verse 10.
9. Otto, F., *Introduction to Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya-Saṁhitā*, Madras, 1916, pp. 16, 96-97.
10. Bhattacharya, B. (Ed.), *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, Vol. 54, Baroda, 1967, p. 46.
11. Agrawala, R.C., 'Nṛsiṁha-Varāha-Viṣṇu images and some allied problems', *Lalit Kala*, No. 16, 1974, pp. 11-21.

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12. Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 409-410.
13. Bhattacharya, B.C., *Indian Images*, Pt. I, Calcutta, p. 8.
14. Cf. Desai, K.S., *op. cit.*, p. 47.
15. *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (Stein tr.), v. 25.
16. The art of Kashmir before the 7th century A.D. reflected the assimilation of alien artistic idioms. This is the period when most of the sculptures were carved either with Gandharan impact or treated with Gupta mannerisms. The examples studied by the present scholar in his book *Sculptures of Kashmir* establish that the Gupta mannerisms of northern India and particularly of the Mathura school made their way on to the sculptures of Kashmir. The migration of Gupta art to Kashmir was made possible via Gandhara [Malla, B.L., *Sculptures of Kashmir (600-1200 A.D.)*, Delhi, 1990, pp. 60-84, 92-94].
Kashmir received not only inspirations from outside of its geographical boundaries but in its own turn, it also contributed ideas, styles and mannerisms in the development of the art of the areas beyond its territories. Incidentally, a reference may be made to an image of Vaikuṇṭha installed in the Lakshman temple at Khajuraho of 10th century A.D. which bore an inscription 'Kashmiri type of Viṣṇu image'. (For details about the reverberation of Kashmirian sculpture elsewhere, see *ibid.*, pp. 94-99.)
17. *Ibid.*, fig. 7.
18. Pal, P., *Bronzes of Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 64-65
19. Malla, B.L., *op. cit.*, figs. 23-24.
20. *Ibid.*, figs. 43-44.
21. Cf. fn. 19 above.
22. Serpent-hood can be seen above the head of Viṣṇu (bust) in the sculpture gallery of Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi; the exact provenance of this image is unknown. Similarly, the serpent-hood can be seen on the head of Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa from Jhalawar Museum. C. Sivaramamurti has also reported such an example of Pāla Viṣṇu from Bengal in his book *Indian Bronzes*, Bombay, 1962, fig. 15.
23. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, III, 44, 9-13; cf. Desai, K.S., *op. cit.*, p. 39.
24. *Ibid.* See also *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Vol. II, p. 141, fn. 1.
25. Cf. Desai, K.S., *op. cit.*, p. 43.
26. Agrawala, R.C., 'Nṛsiṁha-Varāha-Viṣṇu images and some allied problems', *op. cit.*, p. 17.
27. Mitra, D., *Pandrethan, Avantipur and Martand*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 101, fn. 1.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.
30. Goetz, H., 'A masterpiece of mediaeval Kashmir metal art', *Journal of Asiatic Society, Letters*, Vol. XIX, 1953, pp. 45-55.
31. *Ibid.*

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4

Āyudhapuruṣas

Vaiṣṇavism appears to have enjoyed a position of high reverence for several centuries in Kashmir. Many temples were built and were decorated with Vaiṣṇava relief sculptures and installed with various aspects of the images of Viṣṇu in stone and bronze. Though the images of Viṣṇu in Kashmir have been dealt with at length, the *Āyudhapuruṣas* have not received so far the measure of attention they deserve. Therefore, it is attempted here to throw some light on this aspect of Vaiṣṇava iconography and illustrate the distinctive features with some outstanding examples.

Iconography of Āyudhapuruṣas

Before discussing the *Āyudhapuruṣas* of Kashmir, the iconography of the *āyudhapuruṣas* as described in the different *śilpa* texts may be considered. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* describes *Cakrapuruṣa* as a male figure with round eyes and a drooping belly. According to this text *Cakrapuruṣa* should be adorned with various ornaments. The text further prescribes that the image of *Cakrapuruṣa* should be made to look to Viṣṇu, and the lower left hand of Viṣṇu should be placed on the head of Cakra- *Cakrapuruṣa.*[1] Gopinatha Rao has given a detailed description of *Cakra-puruṣa* and other *Āyudhapuruṣas*, but he has not mentioned the source of his information.[2]

According to Rao, *Āyudhapuruṣas* should be made *aṣṭatāla* measure; they should each have only one face with a pair of eyes, the head should be adorned with the *karaṇḍamukuṭa* and each of them should have only two hands held over the chest in the *añjali* pose. When their hands are in the *añjali* pose, the particular emblem or weapon, which each of them is intended to represent, is shown over the crown worn on the head, otherwise, the weapon or emblem is placed between the hands.[3]

Some of the Vaiṣṇava attributes are depicted as male while a few are depicted as female. In the case of the latter the gender was determined by the gender of the word that denoted them. Thus the word *gadā* being femi-

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nine, the mace was personified as a beautiful woman and was known as *kaumudakī*, while *śaṅkha*, *cakra* and *padma* were represented as male figures. Sometimes *śaṅkha* is shown as a masculine figure while *cakra* and *padma* are taken as of neuter gender and according to the texts they should be shown as eunuchs. But in actual practice *śaṅkha, cakra and padma*—all the three are generally depicted as male figures. It would indeed be difficult to depict the hermaphrodite form visually. Curiously enough, Sivaramamurti reported a panel showing *Āyudhapuruṣas* in the Madras Museum in which the *gadā* is represented as a man, not as a woman. The texts also refer to the personification of *śakti*, *aṅkuśa*, *pāśa* and *vajra* and their gender was fixed on the basis of the word denoting them.[4] The personified depiction of the attributes is less common than as emblems. The reason for the paucity of personified images of the attributes of Viṣṇu is not known, though there is no injunction against the making of such images.

According to the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, the *gadā* should be personified as a female of yellow colour.[5] She should have slender waist and should be bedecked with various ornaments. She should carry a *chāmara* in her hand and the right hand of Viṣṇu should be shown placed on the head of the *gadā*. The *śaṅkha* should be represented as a white male figure with a pair of pretty eyes. In a comparatively later text, called *Śilparatna*, the *cakra* is referred to as having eight to sixteen arms while Viṣṇu is to be placed within a *ṣaṭkoṇa cakra*.[6] The personified figures have also been detected in the early and medieval sculptures of eastern and northern India. The nucleus of *Āyudhapuruṣas* has been referred to in a square coin of Maues, where the attribute *vajra* appears as a man standing against a double pronged *vajra* and he is shown in front of the enthroned god Indra or Zeus whose right hand is placed on the personified *vajra*'s head.[7]

Āyudhapuruṣas in the Sculptures of Kashmir

The images of *Āyudhapuruṣas* are found to occur in Kashmir from about the 6th-7th century A.D. onwards. Such images were found with the single-headed Viṣṇu images as well as with the images of the Vaikuṇṭha aspect of Viṣṇu.[8] The images of *Āyudhapuruṣas* occur both in stone and metal. Curiously enough, of the four *Āyudhapuruṣas*, Kashmir always went for two images only. In almost all images of Viṣṇu or Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu the god is shown flanked on either side by *Gadādevī* and *Cakrapuruṣa* respectively (Fig. 2). There is hardly any image of Viṣṇu which is found to be flanked or attended by *Śaṅkha puruṣa* and *Padma puruṣa*. *Cakrapuruṣa* and *Gadādevī* in Kashmir appeared always as dwarfish figures and their heights are

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restricted almost to one-third of the main image. The figures of these *Āyudhapuruṣas* are carved in acute flexions. They appear standing either in *abhaṅga* or *tribhaṅga* posture (Figs. 5, 6, 23). The *bhaṅgas* are, in certain cases, found to have been worked out almost to a breaking point. The images of *Cakrapuruṣa* and *Gadādevī* in Kashmir are characterised by a diagnostic mannerism or idiom. Both these *Āyudhapuruṣas* are always shown two-handed. *Gadādevī* in most cases holds in her right hand a *cāuri* and her left hand shows *chinmudrā*.[9] While *Cakrapuruṣa* holds in his right hand a *chāmara*, his left hand is engaged in *kaṭihasta* pose (Figs. 22, 23, 32). But while *Gadādevī* is shown simply holding the *chāmara*, *Cakrapuruṣa* is shown as though waving it with his raised right hand. In case of *Gadādevī* in Kashmir some novelties are found. In one of such images, her left hand is placed on her waist, while with the dangling right hand she supports the end pieces of her scarf (Fig. 31). In some cases the attributes, which are being personified, are shown either at the top or behind the head of *Āyudhapuruṣas*. In the damaged image of *Gadādevī* (Fig. 31) from Avantipur, the topmost portion of the *gadā* and the damaged palm of Viṣṇu are noticed on the top of the head of the *Gadādevī*. In some images of Viṣṇu the discus (*cakra*) is noticed behind the head of *Cakrapuruṣa* (Fig. 32). But in some of the images, the discus at the back has not been properly indicated (Fig. 19). Curiously, in an image of Viṣṇu-Caturvyūha from Verinag, the head of *Cakrapuruṣa* is topped by a single-hooded snake canopy (Fig. 24).

As for the costumes and coiffure, the Kashmir *Āyudhapuruṣas* offer certain novel features. In some of the images *Cakrapuruṣa* is shown with matted locks (Fig. 21). Images of *Cakrapuruṣa* are also shown with a single pearl necklace (Figs. 24, 32). In some cases the *Āyudhapuruṣas* are shown with long garlands just like the *vanamālā* of Viṣṇu (Fig. 21). In some of the images *Gadādevī* is shown wearing a *sāḍi* which reaches up to her anklets (Fig. 23), while in certain cases her lower garments are extended up to her knees (Fig. 31). She wears in most cases a three-pronged crown (Figs. 21, 23), which reminds us of the typical character of the hill crowns. But there are instances in which *Gadādevī's* hair has been arranged in a different way and is clasped by an ornamental *tiara* (Fig. 31). It is interesting to note that though some of the *Āyudhapuruṣas* in Kashmir are shown as looking up towards the main god (Figs. 23, 32), as prescribed in the texts, others are shown looking vacantly towards the front (Figs. 19, 24). In some of the Viṣṇu images the bust of a female figure is seen placed between the legs of the deity. She has been identified not as a personified *āyudha* but as *Bhūdevī*.[10]

Some years ago the National Museum (New Delhi) has acquired a small

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bronze image of Viṣṇu-Vaikuṇṭha from Kashmir.[11] Though not of very sharp features, it is observed that far more attention has been paid to the shaping of the heads and common body of Viṣṇu, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha and Kapila, respectively; the *Cakrapuruṣa* and *Gadādevī* as well as *Bhūdevī* have received far less care in this complex image. Nevertheless, they conform to the iconography of Kashmir images. *Cakrapuruṣa*, who stands to the proper left of Viṣṇu, is in *dvibhaṅga* posture. With his upraised right hand he wields a *chāmara* and his left hand is placed on the thigh. He wears three *hāras*, besides a *vanamālā*. His eyes, made of silver inlays, look up towards the master. He wears a short *dhoti*, indicated by ridged lines, with a waist-band clasping it tightly. A three-fold sash runs across the thighs and the ends are tied with a loop at the left. The circular halo around his head is plain at the back, but has a floral decoration as a border on the front face. The lower left hand of Viṣṇu is placed over the edge of the halo. The left foot of *Cakrapuruṣa* is bent at the knee and is slightly pushed forward for convenience of stance.

The figure of *Gadādevī* is in *dvibhaṅga*, a manner corresponding with the stance of *Cakrapuruṣa*. Her *jaṭāmukuṭa* is embellished with a bejewelled crown, while the chignon is shown protruding towards the right. She wears a broad pendanted *hāra* with a large floral pendant passing between the breasts and resting on the chest. A bejewelled *kaṭibandha* clasps the tight and short *sāḍi*. She wears a large bejewelled *hāra* and a floral *vanamālā*. With her right hand she holds a mace (*gadā*), which follows the contour of the torso. The left hand is held up in adoration. The ornaments, apart from the *hāras*, comprise heavy ear-rings, beaded bracelets and bangles. The eyes are made of inlays of silver. The right hand of Viṣṇu rests on the flange of the otherwise plain halo, immediately above the *jaṭāmukuṭa*.

Bhūdevī is shown between the two legs of Viṣṇu, as though emerging from the ocean from where she had been rescued by Viṣṇu. Two-handed, she is attired in the same manner as *Gadādevī* and has also a similar *hāra* with a pendant. The right hand is raised upward, while the left hand follows the contour of her left side. The body is bent towards the right, suggesting a *dvibhaṅga* form.

This bronze sculpture shows the typical sculptural style of personified weapons of Viṣṇu, as well as the figure of *Bhūdevī* prevailing in Kashmir.

The study of the *Āyudhapuruṣas* reveals one factor beyond any doubt that the artists paid careful attention to the carving of the main image and tried to bring out the beauty of the image as best as they could in comparison to the images of the accompanying *Āyudhapuruṣas*. The figures of *Āyudhapuruṣas* were given comparatively less attention in their execution and final finish and are found to be rather coarsely and summarily treated.

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Nevertheless, the *Āyudhapuruṣas* of Kashmir have diagnostic features of their own as discussed above and these distinguish them from the *Āyudhapuruṣas* of the other regions of India, though they derive support from common *śilpa* texts as seen above.

References

1. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Bk. III, ch. 85-VV, pp. 13-14; Banerjea, J.N., *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta (1956), second edition, p. 539; Rao, T.A. Gopinatha, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Pt. I, Delhi, 1968, second edition, p. 290.
2. Rao, T.A. Gopinatha, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1968, second edition, pp. 280-290; see also Vol. I, Pt. II, second edition, pp. 77-80.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 288-289.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 289-290; see also Banerjea, J.N., *op. cit.*, pp. 537-538; see also Sivaramamurti, C., 'Geographical and Chronological Factors in Indian Iconography', *Ancient India*, No. 6, 1950, p. 51.
5. Rao, T.A. Gopinatha, *op. cit.*, p. 289.
6. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 539.
7. Banerjea, 'Hindu Iconography', *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. XIV (1946), p. 72.
8. An image of Viṣṇu with *Cakrapuruṣa* and *Gadādevī*, dated 7th cent. A.D. vide Fig. No. 2. Curiously, the *Nilamata Purāṇa* (vv. 1245-46) mentions that in Kashmir four places were dedicated to four weapons of Viṣṇu, namely, *Śaṅkha, Cakra, Gadā* and *Padma*.
9. A number of images of *Gadādevī* in Kashmir are endowed with this *mudrā;* see Fig. Nos. 19 and 23.
10. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 85, 2-6; see also Desai, Kalpana S., *Iconography of Viṣṇu in Northern India, up to the Mediaeval Period*, New Delhi, 1973, p. 14. For detailed discussion about *Āyudhapuruṣas* see also Sivaramamurti, C., 'The weapons of Viṣṇu', *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. XVIII (1955), pp. 128-136; Asher, Fredrick M., *The Art of Eastern India (300-800 A.D.)*, Minnesota (1980), pp. 25, 32, 33; Banerjea, 'Hindu Iconography', *Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. XIII, 1945, pp. 73-74, 79-80, 87; also see Desai, Kalpana S., *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9, 13, 42.
11. Malla, B.L., 'A Note on Vaiṣṇavite Āyudhapuruṣas in Mediaeval Kashmiri Sculptures', *Indian Museum Bulletin*, Vol. XX, 1985, figs. 9-11.

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Incarnations of Viṣṇu

The concept of incarnations is deeply entrenched in the Hindu mode of thinking. It attained its apogee at the hands of Vaiṣṇava thinkers, who elaborated the concept in a multi-form. The *Bhāgavatagītā* as a Vaiṣṇava work on philosophy is replete with the concept of incarnations, which is said to have undergone an evolutionary process before becoming a full-fledged philosophical construct. According to Ved Kumari,[1] the theory of incarnations is traceable to 'the Vedic idea that many gods are just one god, suggesting conversely that one god may become many. From this idea it was only one step more to the theory of incarnations, i.e., if one god can become many, he can also assume any form, human or animal, to achieve some special purpose.' The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* as one of the earliest texts has alluded to only four incarnations,[2] i.e., Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha and Vāmana. The first three are directly affiliated with Prajāpati and the last one is connected with Viṣṇu.

The *Purāṇas* as a rich treasure-house of depictions about various incarnations of gods have added a new dimension to the concept of incarnations. They have in particular made a mention of different incarnations of Viṣṇu. The *Nilamata Purāṇa*[3] of Kashmir has also recorded different incarnations of Viṣṇu, but it does not present them in a systematic manner. It has made a mention of incarnations of Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Haṁsa, Aśvaśīrṣa, Nṛsiṁha, Trivikrama, Rāma Dāśarathi, Madhusūdana, and Buddha. The Kalki and Paraśurāma incarnations are absent from the text. The same are found in Kṣemendra's *Daśāvatāracarita* (10th-11th century A.D.). It is safe to conclude that the concept of incarnations might have been in the making when the *Nilamata Purāṇa* was being written. But, it assumed a full-fledged shape and form when Kṣemendra, the polymath of Kashmir, penned his monumental work *Daśāvatāracarita*.

In addition to the saga of incarnations, the *Nilamata Purāṇa* has also alluded to multi-form legends associated with Viṣṇu,[4] who is said to have slain Madhu and Kaiṭabha (demons), fought with Naraka (demon), released the elephant chief and also slain Jalodbhava (demon).

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Vāmana-Trivikrama

The *Rigveda*, a compilation of books, has recorded the myth of Vāmanāvatāra (Vāmana incarnation) as Viṣṇu having taken three strides for the weal of the world and also for vanquishing the demons.[5] The same type of myth had found a mention in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*,[6] the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[7] and the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.[8] What these texts establish is that the Asuras (demons) agreed to give to the vanquished gods as much of portion of the earth as Vāmanāvatāra could lie on. Viṣṇu inflated his size to the extent that he encompassed the entire earth for the defeated gods. The same legend puts on a new dimension in the *Mahābhārata*[9] which has added new details to the myth of Viṣṇu. The *Purāṇas* have also detailed out the myth of Viṣṇu in his Vāmanāvatāra with some variations thereby adding new colour to the legend. The *Nilamata Purāṇa* of Kashmir has dittoed the description of the legend of the Vāmanāvatāra with the deviation that the Nāga Mahāpadma appears before Visvagaspa with a view to acquiring land instead of Viṣṇu appearing before the king Bali.[10] The said text also describes Vāmana as a tīrtha, which can be connected with Viṣṇu.[11] What is remarkable about the evolution of the elemental concept of this *avatāra* is that it has been associated with Viṣṇu from the very outset.

The myth of Vāmanāvatāra has served as a fundamental motif for the artists of Kashmir. The form of Vāmana (dwarf) or Trivikrama, his inflated size (assuming gigantic proportions as to encompass the entire earth), has crept into the sculptures of Kashmir thereby giving it a new direction. The iconography of Vāmana is not uniformly the same in all the ancient texts. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*,[12] the god Vāmana is identical with crooked limbs and a flat body. The two-handed variety of Vāmana as depicted by the *Agni Purāṇa*[13] must have an umbrella and a staff as his emblems.

The Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu in bronze is exceptional and rare too. The image of this deity (Fig. 33) as is available in the Devasar frame (Fig. 11), therefore, assumes great significance. The god in this frame is two-handed, the left hand holding a staff from which a sack is shown suspended and the right hand palm is shown facing the body. The headgear is of the same type as is found in the *Śeṣaśāyī* Viṣṇu (Fig. 13) available in the same frame. Vāmana on his right is flanked by the seated figure of king Bali probably conferring the gift of three strides of land. He on his left is flanked by the seated figure of the queen of king Bali with her hands in *namaskāra mudrā*. The main deity is adorned with a beaded necklace, *upavīta*, *vanamālā* and the lower portion of his figure is draped (a piece of

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cloth). The identification of this relief as Kṛṣṇa[14] being worshipped by king Śankaravarman and his queen Sugandha is far from truth.

Trivikrama, in reality, is an extension and elaboration of the motif of the Vāmana incarnation. It represents Viṣṇu suddenly growing into *virāṭa* form from the Vāmana form with a view to measuring the entire earth. Kashmir being well aware of the theme of the legends connected with Viṣṇu has yielded one such highly interesting image (Fig. 34) dilating on the subject of Trivikrama. This relief in particular is also a part of the Viṣṇu frame hailing from Devasar (Anantnag district). The relief is by and large a fusion of the theme of *vāmana* form of Viṣṇu with the *virāṭa* form of Trivikrama. Here the god is shown as measuring out the three steps of land given to him by Bali, a demon-god. In fact, as is evident from the relief (Fig. 33), after being endowed with the gift by the demon-king Bali, the Vāmana expands his size to the *Virāṭa* form (Fig. 34) with the purpose of regaining the whole earth, which the gods in their battle with the Asuras (demons) had lost to the latter.

The said image is categorised as that of a four-handed variety. Trivikrama is holding a stylised mace and a shield by his upper two hands and a conch-shell by his lower left hand, while the fourth hand is empty. A small figure of a horse stands by the side of the right leg of Trivikrama. Horse as such in the totality of the relief is a pointer to and suggestive of Bali's horse sacrifice. It is really interesting to focus on king Bali in the relief making every effort to pull down Trivikrama by holding his left leg raised to his chest-level. The deity is also adorned with three-peaked tiara, from the centre of which is seen a lotus emerging. Such a feature of Trivikrama's tiara is an interesting characteristic of many Viṣṇu and Vaikuṇṭha images from the vale of Kashmir. H. Goetz,[15] a well-known art critic, has not been able to characterise the image correctly and has identified it as a representation of Kalki.

Nṛsiṁha

To trace the origins of Nṛsiṁha worship in India is a really difficult task. However, there are scholars who suggest the prevalence of Nṛsiṁha worship in the beginnings of the Christian era. *The Mahābhārata* as one of the earliest texts has recorded Nṛsiṁha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu.[16] The full-scale elaboration of the myth of Nṛsiṁha incarnation is available in a text like *Harivaṁśa*, where it is said that Viṣṇu in his Nṛsiṁha incarnation is out to emancipate the world from the terror unleashed by Hiraṇyakaśipu, a demon-king.[17] According to the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, the worship of Nṛsiṁha incarnation is undertaken for purposes of warding off obstacles,

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pacifying the baneful effects of evil stars, removing the perils caused by thieves, wild animals and enemies operating in darkness.[18]

The *Nilamata Purāṇa* of Kashmir has also recorded the tearing off of Hiraṇyakaśipu to pieces by Nṛsiṁha with his fierce claws.[19] The reasons for slaying the demon are not dilated upon in the said text. That the worship of Nṛsiṁha was popular in Kashmir is established by some of the places that are dedicated to him and also by frequent references in the texts. The temple dedicated to Nṛsiṁha and the installation of his idols at various sites stand recorded in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*[20] of Kalhaṇa Pandit. A rare type of Vaikuṇṭha image has also been reported by Ray in the collection of Central Asian Antiquities Museum, Delhi.[21] The said image has the side faces of a lion suggesting its kinship with Nṛsiṁha images.

The famous frame yielded from Devasar (Anantnag district) has recorded the movement of a meandering lotus-stalk in several spiral twists portraying various incarnations of Viṣṇu including that of the man-lion (Nṛsiṁha) (Fig. 35). Hiraṇyakaśipu in this portrayal stands on his knees desperately trying to catch hold of his dagger and Nṛsiṁha holding him firmly by his hair. Unlike other Indian images treating the theme, the Kashmirian image does not record the macabre killing of Hiraṇyakaśipu, but it portrays the scene of slaying the demon just by catching hold of his hair. The hybrid god in this image has the head of a lion and the body of a man. He has four hands; all of them are empty. The upper right hand is shown in the attitude of slapping Hiraṇyakaśipu and the upper left hand shows the gesture of *vismaya* (amazement), while the lower right hand displays *sūchī mudrā* and the lower left hand clutches the hair of the demon-king. The other adornments of the deity are a crown, a necklace, a *vanamālā* and a chest-band.

Here it is necessary to refer to an image from Varanag (Verinag), now preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar dating around eleventh century A.D. The image is that of a Kevala Nṛsiṁha (Fig. 36) seated in an *utkutikāsana*. He has two hands, which are resting on the hilt of a club. With his head as that of a stylised lion, the rest of the body is that of a man. A huge *vanamālā* is dangling from the shoulders of the Kevala Nṛsiṁha, who is shown possessed of a powerful body. The main attention of the artist has been lavished on the knees and shoulders wherein the real strength of the god is shown concentrated. The image is absolutely lacking in modelling in his body formations, but his lion-face is powerful enough to exude earthly human emotions.

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Varāha

There are some texts which have ascribed the Varāha incarnation to Prajāpati.[22] Brahmā as the divinity responsible for the upliftment of the earth is certainly testified by the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and *Liṅga Purāṇa*.[23] Viṣṇu assuming the form of a boar was solely motivated to uplift the earth.[24] But, the *Agni Purāṇa*, *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* and *Matsya Purāṇa* allude to Viṣṇu's assuming the said form with a view to slaying Hiraṇyākṣa, a demon.[25] The *Nilamata Purāṇa* has a different version to offer. It refers to Viṣṇu assuming the boar form to uplift the earth with his tusk tearing the mountain into pieces.[26] There is a frequent reference to Varāha tīrtha,[27] the pilgrimage to which is described as giving equal merit as that of performing a horse-sacrifice (*Rājasūya Yajña*).

That the worship of Varāha incarnation must have been quite popular in Kashmir is testified by a reference available in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* to the installation of a lofty and gorgeous image of Varāha.[28] The illustrious king of Kashmir, Lalitāditya (724-761 A.D.), as per the version of the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, is said to have built a temple of *Mahā-Varāha* at Parihasapura (modern Paraspor). The popularity and prevalence of Varāha worship in Kashmir is further replenished by some of the place-names directly connected with Varāha (boar). Varāhamūla (modern Baramula) is associated with Varāha only.[29]

There are two attractive images depicting boar-incarnation of Viṣṇu on the frame (Fig. 11) hailing from Devasar (Anantnag district). According to the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*,[30] 'Nṛvarāha should be represented on Śeṣa, having four hands with a beautiful jewelled hood, his eyes full of wonder looking at the goddess. In his natural hands should be placed the ploughshare and the club and his other two hands should be held in the *añjali-mudrā*. He should be adorned with snakes. In the other form he is seen in the *ālīḍha* pose on Śeṣa. On his left arm rests the goddess Earth, with both of her hands engaged in salutation. He holds the club in his upper left hand. The other holding the disc may be raised in order to kill the demon Hiraṇyākṣa, who has a trident in his hand.' In one of the images in Devasar frame (Fig. 37), the divinity is firm-footed on the *Ādiśeṣa* symbolising water. Varāha has four hands carrying the earth-goddess (*Bhūdevī*) on his upper left elbow. The right hand of the earth-goddess is in *abhaya-mudrā*. The different hands of the Varāha are invested with the attributes of a sword or a mace and a conch-shell. The lower left hand is placed on the left thigh of the Varāha and the lower right hand holds the tail of the *Ādiśeṣa*, which is also depicted as possessed of four hands. The two hands of *Ādiśeṣa* display *namaskāra mudrā* and the other two hands hold a

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ploughshare and a pestle. The relief has a brilliant moulding, its proportions are executed with exemplary skill and other minor details too exhibit a dexterous treatment.

In the second image of the same frame (Fig. 10) the deity is exhibited in a mood of slaying the demon Hiraṇyākṣa by engaging him in a fight. The demon also is most expressive the way he is shown resisting the boar. He is holding a sword (?) with his two hands with the objective of launching a counter-attack. The deity has four hands, the right upper hand holding a discus (slightly raised) and the lower right hand grasping the hilt of a mace or sword, while the upper left hand is carrying a conch brought near to his mouth just to blow it and the lower left hand is lying on his left thigh. In terms of plastic art, it is very close to the relief already discussed.

It is apt to mention that the artists of Kashmir have followed the textual prescriptions in moulding, executing and depicting the boar-incarnation.

Hayagriva

It is a matter of common belief that Viṣṇu had to assume Hayagriva form with the objective of rescuing the *Vedas* which were stolen by the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.[31] But, a careful perusal of the *purāṇic* literature reveals various versions regarding Viṣṇu's assuming the Hayagriva incarnation. As per the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Devi Bhāgavata*, Viṣṇu is said to have killed the demon Hayagriva.[32] In the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*,[33] Viṣṇu is said to have assumed the countenance of a horse (*hayagriva*) with eight arms. The same text prescribes that Viṣṇu in his four arms must have a conch-shell, a wheel, a mace and a lotus. The rest of the four hands are to be placed on the four personified *Vedas*. That the Hayagriva incarnation was on the mind-plate of the Kashmirians is unambiguously testified by the *Nilamata Purāṇa*.[34]

Very few Hayagriva images have been discovered from various places in India. In Kashmir an image depicting the said motif (Fig. 38) has been discovered from Devasar (Anantnag district). The deity has eight arms, the upper two hands holding the orbs of the sun and the moon, the next pair of hands holding a stylus and a book followed by the hands grasping a lotus and a conch-shell, the remaining hands displaying *varada mudrā* and holding perhaps a water-jar. The deity is also adorned with a crown, a *vanamālā* and an *upavīta*. The attributes as mentioned in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* have not been fully adhered to, as there are some variations perceptibly visible. The presence of the sun and the moon as attributes of the prominent deity is a rare feature in such images. These emblems are available in Śaivite sculptures as well.

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References

1. Kumari, Ved, The *Nilamata Purāṇa*, Vol. I, Jammu, 1968, p. 142.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 142; cf. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I.8.1.1-6, 7.5.1-5, 14.1.2.11, 1.2.5.1ff.
3. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 143.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 153-54. The *Nilamata Purāṇa* does not depict Paraśurāma as an incarnation but as a devotee of Viṣṇu and there too, the worship of Viṣṇu's image with animal sacrifice indicates probably his Śaiva character (see *ibid.*, pp. 154-55).
5. *Rigveda*, I.22.17; see also Macdonell, A.A., *Vedic Mythology*, Varanasi, 1963, p. 39.
6. *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, II, 1, 3; cf. Desai, K., *Iconography of Viṣṇu* (In North India, upto Mediaeval period), New Delhi, 1973, p. 98.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 98, cf. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 1.2.5.1ff.
8. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 149; cf. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, II.1.3.1.
9. *Mahābhārata* (Gita Press Ed.), pp. 789-91.
10. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 148.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, III, 85, 54.
13. *Agni Purāṇa*, adh. 49, 5.
14. Goetz, H., 'A masterpiece of mediaeval Kashmir metal art', *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters*, Vol. XIX, 1953, pp. 45-55.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Mahābhārata*, XII, 337, 34-36; see Desai, K., *op. cit.*, p. 85.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 85; cf. *Harivaṁśa*, III, 41-47.
18. Parimoo, R. (Ed.), *Vaiṣṇavism in Indian Art and Culture*, New Delhi, 1987, p. 378.
19. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 147.
20. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, iv, 186.
21. Ray, S.C., 'A Note on Unpublished Viṣṇu image from Kashmir', *Journal of Asiatic Society, Letters*, Vol. XVII, 1951, pp. 251-53, pl. IIb.
22. Cf. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 145.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 145; see also Rao, T.A. Gopinatha, *Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Pt. I, p. 129; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I.4.1ff; *Linga Purāṇa*, I.4.59ff.
24. Rao, T.A. Gopinatha, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-32.
25. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, II.19.13; III.36.11; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 47.47; cf. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 145.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, vi, 197.
29. *Ibid.*, vi, 186, 206, etc.
30. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, III, 79, 2-7.
31. *Mahābhārata*, XII, 335, 22-72.
32. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, XI.4.17; *Devi Bhāgavata*, I.5; cf. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 146.
33. Desai, K., *op. cit.*, p. 143; cf. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, III, 7.
34. Kumari, Ved, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 147.

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6

Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa

Vaiṣṇavism had been a very popular religion in Kashmir reflecting a synthesised form of Vaiṣṇava cults, i.e., a fusion of the concept of the Vedic Viṣṇu, the concept of Viṣṇu in *Pāñcarātra* school, the religion of the *Satvatas* and finally, the religion of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. We know that the cult of *Bhāgavata* accepted Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa as their supreme deity while the *Pāñcarātra* followers worshipped four *Vyūhas*, namely, Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.[1] These two cults subsequently led to the introduction of a sizeable number of Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa and Vaikuṇṭha images. Besides, Kashmir also produced different incarnations of Viṣṇu and composite form of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī among the Vaiṣṇava images. It looks that introduction of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī in Indian art goes to the credit of Kashmiri sculptors.[2] Yet another type of image which did not receive the required attention from the scholars, has been the image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa type. An attempt has been made here to throw light on this neglected aspect and introduce some sculptures of the type from Kashmir. Unfortunately the present whereabouts of one of these then hailing from Lalahar (Pulwama) are not known (Fig. 40). One image is from Zeithyar (Srinagar), and has been dated stylistically in the 9th century A.D. (Fig. 39). The other image is in a private collection at Devasar[3] (Fig. 41). This has been dated in the 12th-13th century A.D.

The iconography of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa finds its mention in different texts. In the *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā*, Lakṣmī appears as a consort of Viṣṇu forming a pair not only with Viṣṇu but even with Vaikuṇṭha. The Vaikuṇṭha is accompanied by his consort Lakṣmī. She is stated to have been seated on his left thigh, just as in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images. This type is described in the *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā* as Lakṣmī-Vaikuṇṭha.[4] The seated variety of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa appears to have been more popular than the standing ones. According to the description of the *Skanda Purāṇa*,[5] Lakṣmī should be seated to the left of Nārāyaṇa. Our god holds the disc and the conch in his right hands while with his left arm he embraces Lakṣmī. The *Rūpamaṇḍana*[6]

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describes Nārāyaṇa as holding his usual emblems and Lakṣmī holding a lotus, and Viṣṇu riding a Garuḍa. The Kashmirian artists were perhaps fully aware of these textual prescriptions of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images, but did not follow them in totality as was done in certain other parts of India.

In 1973, K.S. Desai[7] published his book 'Iconography of Viṣṇu', and there, for the first time, she cited an example of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa image from Kashmir. This image has been dated in the 9th century A.D. and is now in the collection of S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar. In this image Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa is shown as flying on the Garuḍa; the latter is shown in human form with the belly protruding out while his feet are like that of a bird. Viṣṇu supports his feet on the feathers of Garuḍa, which bear leaf-like patterns. Garuḍa bears the mark of a serpent on his forehead and has a beaked nose. He is shown here holding a pot in his hands. Lakṣmī is seated on the left leg of Viṣṇu as in the case of Devasar image (Fig. 41). But there are some differences in the attributes, as the Lakṣmī from S.P.S. Museum holds lotus and the conch in her two hands, but the Lakṣmī in Devasar image (Fig. 41) carries *cāuri* and conch respectively. The emblems of Viṣṇu in both the cases are the same. Viṣṇu holds in his right hands lotus and the *khaḍga* and by his left hands, he carries the disc and the conch. Both the images have three-peaked tiara and are adorned with *vanamālās* also. Incidentally a reference may be made to R.C. Agrawala, who has alluded to an image of Lakṣmī-Vaikuṇṭha from Kashmir dated 9th century A.D.[8] In this image also Lakṣmī is shown seated to the left of Vaikuṇṭha, and the couple is lifted by a four-armed Garuḍa. The image resembles to a large extent with the single-headed Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu from S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar. There is yet another image of this type (Lakṣmī-Vaikuṇṭha) in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, dated in the 11th century A.D. As discussed above, this particular form of Lakṣmī-Vaikuṇṭha is explicitly mentioned in the *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā*. Here a reference to a damaged image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, seated on a Garuḍa, may be made (Fig. 39), which hails from Zeithyar (Srinagar). In this image the bust of Garuḍa is depicted in human form as in the above cases, and is shown supporting Viṣṇu by his hands. Not only the bust of Viṣṇu, but also the head, certain parts of Lakṣmī's bust and the hands are mutilated. Similar to Devasar (Fig. 41) and S.P.S. Museum images, in the present image Lakṣmī is again shown seated on the left side of Viṣṇu. The powerfully built bust of Garuḍa is topped by a larger and fleshy face. His open and big eyes are guarded by arched eyebrows and he appears to have a pair of fleshy lips. His hair arrangement is stylised and reminds us of the arrangement of hairs in a few earlier Buddhist images. He wears a beaded necklace and possibly a *sarpa-upavīta*.

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Kashmir also produced the standing images of Lakṣmī-Vaikuṇṭha (Fig. 40). In this image Vaikuṇṭha is holding a lotus in his upper right hand, while his lower right hand is mutilated, and by one of his left hands he carries conch and the other is placed on the head of *Cakrapuruṣa. Cakrapuruṣa* is akimbo and is seen gazing upwards for receiving his master's grace. Lakṣmī is depicted with the conch and the lotus in her hands as in the case of the image referred to by Desai. In our image both Vaikuṇṭha and Lakṣmī are adorned with three-crescent tiara which differs from the other examples. Both Lakṣmī and Vaikuṇṭha are adorned with huge *vanamālās.* The image from Devasar (Fig. 41) is shown seated in *padmāsana* with a back stela.

Artistically speaking, the image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa referred to by Desai and the image from Zeithyar (Srinagar) appear to be the earliest examples discovered so far of such a type in Kashmir. These were followed by the standing image of Lakṣmī-Vaikuṇṭha type from Lalahar (Fig. 40), the Lakṣmī-Vaikuṇṭha seated on Garuḍa from Los Angeles County Museum, and the image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa from Devasar (Fig. 41), which stylistically may be later than the images noted above. When compared the image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa published by Desai[9] and the image from Zeithyar (Srinagar) for their better plastic treatments call for an earlier date of execution. The same divine pair from Lalahar (Fig. 40) are endowed with somewhat heaviness and massive stolidity along with unusually fleshy bodies. They exemplify the complete exhaustion of proportionate and pleasingly executed tradition of 9th-10th century images of Kashmir. It appears that sculptors in Kashmir at this stage had suffered a decline in their skill and acumen in stone carving. This pair stands to expose the decadent stage of Kashmir sculptures. The Devasar Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (Fig. 41) further marks the decline of sculptural art in Kashmir. Comparatively ill-proportionate than the other images and decisively stiff and bereft of any animation in the bodies, these images betray the crude workmanship signalling downfall of a rich tradition in Kashmir.

However, these sculptures betray certain uniqueness so far as the iconographical treatment is concerned. In Kashmir we find Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images in seated, standing as well as flying postures. Along with these, we find Nārāyaṇa in two forms, viz., one-faced Nārāyaṇa as well as three-faced Vaikuṇṭha. Similarly, Lakṣmī in most cases is shown seated on the lap of Viṣṇu, while in other types she is shown standing by the left side of Vaikuṇṭha. In the Lakṣmī-Vaikuṇṭha image the lower left hand of Viṣṇu, instead of holding a *Cakra*, is seen gently placed on the head of *Cakrapuruṣa.* Such assemblages of peculiarities are hardly seen in any other place in India and this speaks for the uniqueness of Kashmiri Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images.

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References

1. Dasgupta, M., 'Śraddhā and Bhakti in Vedic Literature', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. V(2), 1930, p. 155; see also Vol. VII(1), 1931, p. 93; Vol. VII(2), p. 343; Vol. VIII(1), 1932, p. 64.
2. Malla, B.L., 'A Note on the Composite Images of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī', *Lalit Kala*, No. 25.
3. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa image of Devasar was previously installed within a temple at Devasar. Subsequently, it was stolen; but it was recovered by the police. After its recovery the image has now been kept in the custody of a priest of the temple.
4. *Jāyakhya Saṁhitā*, 33, 55-56; see also Desai, K.S., *Iconography of Viṣṇu* (in North India, upto Mediaeval Period), New Delhi, 1973, p. 31.
5. *Skanda Purāṇa* (Vaiṣṇava Khaṇḍa, Puruṣottama Mahātmya), 5, 8-9, Bombay, 1909.
6. *Rūpamaṇḍana* (Devatāmūrti Prakaraṇa and Rūpamaṇḍana), IV, 34-36, Calcutta, 1936.
7. Desai, K.S., *op. cit.*, p. 33, fig. 28.
8. Agrawala, R.C., 'Nṛsiṁha-Varāha-Viṣṇu images and some allied problems', *Lalit Kala*, No. 16, 1974, p. 17, pl. II (fig. 7).
9. Cf. fn. 7 above.

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7

Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī

The composite images of Harihara, Ardhanārīśvara, Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava etc. have been under a constant study. The evolution of such images took place, as maintained by some scholars, as a result of sectarian conciliations between the diverse cults of the Hindu pantheon. A new class of composite images has attracted the attention of scholars during the last two decades. This is the Viṣṇu in Ardhanārī form of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī. However, Lakṣmī did not head a cult; hence the question of syncretism between the two cults does not arise. The question arises as to the circumstances in which such *'ekībhūta tanuḥ'* of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī was necessitated. The earliest article on such images was published by P. Pal in the *Journal of Asiatic Society.*[1] His article entitled 'The composite form of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī' included textual references with a few examples. But the examples which he cited hailed from Nepal.[2] His identification was primarily based on the description laid down in the *Tantrasāra* text.[3] The confirmation for this identification came from an inscription[4] in Newari found along with a Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī in the collection of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta. Pal concluded that mutual love between Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī led to their unification and that the text and images were evolved nearly in the same period (c. 13th century).[5] In one of his subsequent articles, Pal referred to a metal image from Nepal belonging to the 17th century A.D. This image was found in the collection of British Museum, London.[6]

D.C. Bhattacharyya was the next to write on the composite image of Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī in the *Journal of Asiatic Society.*[7] While agreeing to the earlier views of Pal, Bhattacharyya felt that such composite images could be present, besides Nepal,[8] in other regions with tantric domination. The reference to the composite forms of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī (*miśra mūrtayāḥ*) was also detected by him in the *Śilparatna*, which significantly tallied with the iconic description of the *Tantrasāra*, as well as with the description of the Newari inscription.[9] According to the *Śilparatna*, the images of Vāsudeva-

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Lakṣmī were made in South India in general and particularly in Kerala. Incidentally, in Kerala the Śālagrāmaśila is considered as symbolical embodiment of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa and the nomenclature of this type has been '*Lakṣmyānvita Nārāyaṇah*' which denotes a composite form of Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa.[10] The term noted above reminds us of a similar expression in the Newari inscription '*Vaiṣṇavam Kamalānvitam*'. Pal believes that there was no particular sect that evolved the composite image of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī.[11] But the author of the *Śilparatna* included the iconographic description of Lakṣmī in the *Śāktaprakaraṇam* and described the composite form under the heading '*Miśramūrtayaḥ*'.[12] The '*Devi mahātmya*' chapter of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* discusses the form of Mahālakṣmī as an important aspect of Śakti. Lakṣmī is also one of the Śaktis in the *Tantrasāra*. In the *Śāradātilakatantra* and in the *Haribhaktivilāsa*, one of the fifty-one Śaktis of Viṣṇu is known as Lakṣmī.[13] Do these references indicate the connection by any chance with the Śakti sect in the composite images of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī?

S.B. Deo, probably the third scholar in sequence, discusses such composite images in his article 'Some Ardhanārī Forms of Viṣṇu'.[14] Therein he refers to a Nārāyaṇa temple of Svathe area in Nepal, where he discovered as many as 12 images of Ardhanārī Viṣṇu. He concluded that such images were evolved due to the fusion of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and tantric Buddhism. He also commented that in India such composite images were not available.[15] However, D.C. Sircar referred to an 11th century inscription in a Śītalā temple at Gaya in which figures an expression '*Kamalārdhangīṇa Viṣṇu*' which probably refers to the existence of a temple for the worship of a composite image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa.[16]

In 1975, Pal published his comprehensive investigations in the 'Bronzes of Kashmir', and there, for the first time, he cited an example of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī image from Kashmir.[17] When Pal published his first article in 1963, he did not include this example. The latest research on this theme has been done by M.C. Joshi,[18] who published a thought-provoking article entitled 'Composite images of Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu: Some Observations'. There he drew attention towards a new acquisition of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī image by National Museum, New Delhi. There he discussed two more examples, one from Himachal Pradesh and the other one from Kashmir. The latter was, of course, considered by Pal in his book 'Bronzes of Kashmir'. The image from an ancient temple at Baijnath (Kangra) in Himachal Pradesh was certainly a new inclusion in the list of such images. Another significant point raised by Joshi was that among the texts that describe the composite images of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī, the *Śāradātilakatantra* of Lakshmana Desikendra, most probably from Kashmir, is roughly dated in the 11th

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century A.D.[19] It may be taken as one of the earliest so far known. In the absence of early examples of the images of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī and till fresh material is discovered, it may be concluded that, most probably, Kashmir produced the earliest image of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī. Also seemingly the images of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī were first made in Kashmir and then the idea was exported to other places through Himachal Pradesh. Incidentally, a Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī image of Pahari style in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi, may at this juncture be referred. This image was published by B.N. Sharma.[20] He has dated this image to the 8th-9th century A.D. while comparing its stunted crown and rendering of the bodily contours with Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu fixed on the outer wall of the Harihara temple No. 1 at Osia, near Jodhpur. However, excepting for the head-dress nothing else is quite discernible in this image; it is, therefore, risky to date the image precisely on this ground alone. I, however, still feel that this image is not earlier than the 11th century A.D. on iconographical grounds. This image is not included in M.C. Joshi's account.

The purpose here is to introduce some interesting images of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī from Kashmir. The present whereabouts of one such image, which hails from Bijbehara (Figs. 42, 43), are not known.[21] One image is from Varanag (modern Verinag) (Fig. 44), and has been dated in the 12th century A.D. Made in grey limestone, this image is now in the collection of S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar. The same Museum has in its collection a mutilated bust of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī, dated in the 13th century A.D., and is made in bluish grey limestone (Fig. 45). The exact provenance of this image is unknown. The other image of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī is housed in the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin (Fig. 46).

The Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī images of Kashmir possess some distinct features. While the Nepali images referred to by the earlier scholars are all of standing variety, the images from Kashmir together with the two examples of Himachal Pradesh are all shown seated on the back of Garuḍa. The number of hands of Garuḍa in Kashmir varies from four to eight. The Garuḍa in the Verinag image (Fig. 44) is given four arms. Of these two arms are engaged in the *namaskāra mudrā*, while the other two support the legs of the composite god. The Berlin image (Fig. 46) has a six-armed Garuḍa, the mount of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī. The normal two hands of Garuḍa are joined in *namaskāra mudrā*, the other two hands are engaged in carrying the feet of the god, while a third pair of hands carries a water-pot and a lotus respectively. The bronze image of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī referred to by Pal shows a Garuḍa with eight hands. The normal two hands here are brought near the chest and support a water-pot, the second pair supports Viṣṇu's feet. The attributes in the other four hands are not clear. Besides the image from

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Bijbehara (Figs. 42, 43), all the three Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī images from Kashmir are eight-handed. The four right hands of these images hold *śaṅkha, cakra, gadā* and *padma*, while the left four carry *kalaśa, darpaṇa, pustaka* and *kamala*. The Bijbehara image (Figs. 42, 43) was four-handed. The two right hands bear lotus and possibly the lower part of a *gadā* (?), while the two left hands carry *darpaṇa* and *pustaka*. This image appears to be of a date earlier than the three other images from Kashmir. It is presumed that the early image was evolved with four hands and subsequently, the number of hands was increased. Curiously, the Bijbehara image retains the Gandhāra-like drapery folds in spite of a considerable gap in time. In all the images of Kashmir the female breast on the left (Lakṣmī's side) is projected quite conspicuously.

Whether the composite figure of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī was an outcome of mutual love between Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī or such images resulted from a strong impact of Śaiva-Śākta cults is still a matter that needs to be clarified. The textual references do not throw sufficient light in this direction. However, the form had been fairly popular in medieval India and Nepal as a number of such images are now reported from Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala and an oblique inscriptional reference is available as far east as Gaya. This form of syncretic image was worshipped for well-being and wealth.

References

1. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Calcutta, Vol. V, Nos. 3-4, 1963, pp. 73-80.
2. Of the two images of Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī which Pal has reported, one is in bronze and is in the collection of Museum für Volkerfunde in Basel, and the other is painted on a *paṭa*, preserved in the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.
3. According to Pal there is a mantra in *Tantrasāra* which is devoted to Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī. He quotes the translation of it in the following way: 'The body of Kamalajā, bright as the lightning, and the body of Vaikuṇṭha, bright as the moon, have been united in love; and are ornamented with various jewels. The goddess carries *vidyā* (knowledge), *pankaja* (lotus), *darpaṇa* (mirror) and *kumbha* (vase) filled with jewels while Vāsudeva has *saroja* (lotus), *gadā* (mace), *śaṅkha* (conch) and *cakra* (discus) in his hands. Let this deity grant you infinite wealth and well-being' [see *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Calcutta, Vol. V, Nos. 3-4, 1963, p. 73; also cf. *Bṛhat Tantrasāra* (Vangavasi ed.), pp. 191-92].
4. In the Newari inscription, the expression *Vaiṣṇavam Kamalānvītam* indicates the composite form of Viṣṇu and Kamalā, which is another synonym of Lakṣmī (see *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Calcutta, Vol. V, Nos. 3-4, 1963, p. 75).

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5. *Ibid.* The inscription reveals the date 383, presumably of the Newari era and, therefore, corresponds to A.D. 1263.
6. Pal, P., 'Notes on Five Sculptures from Nepal', *British Museum Quarterly*, Vol. XXIX, Nos. 1-2, 1964, p. 32, pl. XV.
7. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Calcutta, Vol. VIII, No. 4, 1966, pp. 261-66.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 262, certain verses of *Śilparatna*, a sixteenth century text, cited by Kalpana S. Desai offer explanation for composite Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images, where the form has been described as '*ekībhūta-vapuḥ*' (united body) of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī (see Desai, K.S., 'Some Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa Images from Western India', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Vol. XIV, 1966, p. 132).
10. See fn. 2 above; also cf. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Calcutta, Vol. VIII, No. 4, 1966, p. 263.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Cf. *Śilparatna*, ch. XXIV, verses 9-10.
13. For details see the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Calcutta, Vol. VIII, p. 264.
14. *Bhārati*, Vol. 10-11, 1966-68, pp. 125-53.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
16. Sircar, D.C., 'Ardhanārī Nārāyaṇa', *Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī in Art and Literature* (ed.), D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1970, p. 132; see also Bhattacharyya, D.C., *Iconology of Composite Images*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 30.
17. Pal, P., *Bronzes of Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1975, p. 76, pl. 13.
18. *Puratattva*, No. 11, 1970-80, pp. 81-83.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 82; see also Bhattacharyya, N.N., *History of the Tantra Religion*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 73.
20. Sharma, B.N., 'Pahari Bronzes', *Arts of Himachal*, edited by V.C. Ohri, Simla, 1973, p. 21, fig. 7.
21. The Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī image of Bijbehara was photographed within a temple complex at Bijbehara in early 1982; thereafter, the location of the image is not known.

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8

Syncretic Images

Hari-Hara

The Hari-Hara is a syncretic icon, half Viṣṇu and half Śiva, symbolising syncretism between the Viṣṇu and Śiva cults. The conceptual basis of such images is available in a number of literary treatises and epigraphical records. Kashmir exposed two remarkable images of Hari-Hara. One of these was earlier in the personal collection of Paul F. Walter, New York and is now in the collection of Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin (Figs. 47, 48). The other image of Hari-Hara hails from Dhumatbhal (Fig. 49). The whereabouts of the latter are not known at present. The Hari-Hara of Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin is shown standing in a relaxed posture. The heavily built god puts his weight more on his right leg and due to the impact of this the right hip takes a mild bend. The front face of the god is full and benign and the head is crowned. The image betrays improved attempt at modelling and the body exhibits a metallic finish and the draperies and jewelleries are very neatly and clearly delineated. The image has incipient energy pervading through it. According to the *Harivaṁśa*, in a Hari-Hara image Śiva is to be endowed with Viṣṇu's attributes and vice versa.[1] In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Viṣṇu says to Śiva '*Ya ham so tvam*' and due to ignorance, people cannot appreciate the identity of their beings.[2] Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī* also mentions Hari-Hara in the following way, "In that sanctuary which teaches the noble lesson of the friendship of Śiva, the conqueror of the gods who churns the mind, and of Viṣṇu whose ensign is the eagle, the god parasol with its decorated staff and consummate workmanship of the former lord seems as if powdered with the pollen of the lotuses of the Gaṅgā scattered by the hisses of the snakes in his hair, while that of the latter is vivid like the concentrated flash of lightning which abides close to his cloud-black hair. The golden parasol forms the covering lid of the golden cavity of the cosmic egg containing the sombre and bright regalia and splendid collection of jewels of the moon-crested Śiva

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and Viṣṇu."[3] This proves beyond any doubt that the concept of Hari-Hara was familiar in early Kashmir.

The Hari-Hara image of Berlin Museum (Fig. 47) was studied by Pal[4] and Kramrisch[5] and both of them considered it initially as three-headed figure of Hari-Hara. Pal unknowingly commented that "at a first glance one may well mistake the figure as representation of *Caturānana* Viṣṇu which became so popular in Kārkoṭa, Kashmir. But, in fact, it is a figure with only three heads." This proves that Pal must have studied the sculpture through a frontal photograph but he did not examine the image a actuality. The same holds good about Dr. Kramrisch. In fact, behind this three-headed image, there is at the back, like the *Caturānana* Viṣṇu image, a flat two-dimensionally conceived head, probably delineating Kapila (Fig. 48). This Hari-Hara in Kashmir has, therefore, introduced certain new features and does not tally with conventional description in the text mentioned above. The three heads in front show a terrific Bhairava head on the right, a benign Śiva head in the middle and a damaged Varāha face on the left. The sacred thread remains a thread in the Viṣṇu half on the left but when it crosses the left half, it takes the shape of snake. On the left side of the chest, there is a mark of *śrīvatsa* and between the legs of this composite god there appears a tiny figure of the earth goddess (*Bhūdevī*) whom Viṣṇu recovered from the great ocean. A short dagger, which is usually seen in Kashmiri Viṣṇu images, is in this case shown on the right side (Śiva's) of the waist; on the head of Śiva's side, matted locks are shown with a crescent moon, whereas the hairs of the left side take the shape of attractive ringlets. The figure (Fig. 47) wears a huge garland made of wild leaves and flowers (*vanamālā*). It is interesting to note that in the early sculpture of Kashmir both Viṣṇu and Śiva are provided with *vanamālā*. It is a typical Kashmiri feature. When intact, this image was four-handed. Of the four hands, one of the right hands is intact, which grasps the trident that emerges from the head of a dwarfish figure, most probably representing the *Triśūlapuruṣa*. Both Śiva and his *Āyudhapuruṣa* are endowed with *Ūrdhva-liṅga*. And there must have been on the left the figure of *Cakrapuruṣa* when it was intact. The introduction of *Triśūlapuruṣa* does not go to the credit of Kashmiri art, it was introduced earlier in the Gupta India.[6] When Pal and Kramrisch wrote about this image, they did not see back side of the halo showing another head, which looks quite terrific with bulging eyes and wild mouth. The forehead bears the *tilaka* in the middle. It bears a crown on the head, a pair of rounded *kuṇḍalas* and a single-beaded necklace. The presence of this head on the back proves that the image was definitely inspired from the *Caturānana* image of Kashmir in which there is always at the back the terrific face of Kapila. Similarly, in this three-

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headed Hari-Hara image, the artist relieved at its back the terrific head probably of Kapila, following the pattern of traditional *Caturānana* Viṣṇu. Pal subsequently noticed this fourth head and in one of his subsequent articles, 'A Brahmanical Triad from Kashmir and some related icons', in the *Journal of Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 29, 1975-76, considered the fourth head as representing Kapila. To him, the term Kapila means angry and hence the fourth face is given a frightening expression. This generally points to a syncretistic attitude between Śiva and Vaikuṇṭha aspect of Viṣṇu.

The present scholar, accidentally, got a photograph showing another Hari-Hara image of Kashmir (Fig. 49) which hails from Dhumatbhal. But unfortunately, he could not study this image in actuality, nor could he get a photograph of its back. Therefore, it is not possible to say whether like the other one it too had a fourth head at its back. As it stands, the Hari-Hara is shown three-headed—the terrific Bhairava head on the right, a benign face of Śiva in the middle and the face of Varāha to the left. The figure is shown standing against Nandi, the mount of Śiva. The fore-parts of Nandi are seen on the lower left side of Śiva. Of the two right hands, one is holding a trident (*triśūla*) while the other carries most probably a snake. While of the two left hands, one holds a conch-shell, the other is seen placed on the head of a figure most probably representing *Cakrapuruṣa*. Between the image of Hari-Hara and *Cakrapuruṣa*, there appears an eroded squatting figure of Garuḍa, the mount of Viṣṇu. So the presence of mount Nandi on the right and the Garuḍa on the left is a feature which was not seen in the case of earlier image of Hari-Hara. In this particular panel the *Triśūlapuruṣa* is absent while it has introduced a new element and that is the image of a *Cakrapuruṣa*.

Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha

The Harihara images as a matter of fact were the consequence of the cult of Hari-Hara, which must have been obtaining not only in India, but in Kashmir as well. Viṣṇu and Śiva, as a result of fusion, were not posed as opposed to each other, but were taken as one out to do good to man in general. Such images bespeak of tolerance, amalgamation and syncretism. With the passage of time, Brahmā was added to the already existing cult of Hari-Hara and the triad thus formed came to be known as Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha. It is not easy to pronounce whether there was a cult of the type of Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha already existing which in turn left its imprint on sculpture as a whole. But there are ample evidences available which establish the fusion of Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha underscoring the further

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development in matters of harmonization and syncretisation of various attributes of these three different deities.

The iconographical descriptions regarding Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha are available in the *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa.*[7] Such images as per this text are supposed to have four countenances and six hands holding a rosary, trident, mace, *kamaṇḍalu, khaṭvāṅga* and disc. In the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* also we have some descriptions available regarding such triadic sculptures or icons. The *Nilamata Purāṇa* has assigned equal importance to the deities forming the triad and does not discriminate one deity against the other in matters of investing them with epithets.

An exemplary example of the syncretism of the triad in a single body comes to our notice from the Viṣṇu *Prabhāvali* from Devasar (Anantnag district) in Kashmir (Fig.11). The image (Fig.50) is depicted as standing on a *padmaghaṭa* and is invested with seven heads arranged in three rows. The first row is consisting of boar-vāsudeva-lion heads representing Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu, the second row displaying three human heads representing Maheśa aspect of Śiva and on the top being the head of a horse representing Brahmā[8] as per J.L. Bhan's version. While making a reference to a stone[9] which he claims to have been discovered from Saif-ud-din Pora, Srinagar, Bhan tries to establish a direct nexus between horse and Brahmā. The views put forth by Bhan are untenable as the details of the said stone he is supposed to have made use of are somewhere away from the public gaze. He has also made a mistake in identifying the image as eight-handed which in reality is ten-handed. The present scholar is of the opinion that the emblems of manuscript and stylus he is grasping in two of his hands can be affiliated with Brahmā. The rest of the attributes in the other hands of the deity are the orbs of the sun and the moon, a lotus, a conch-shell, a sword and a *khaṭvāṅga* with the two lower hands placed on the heads of *Gadādevī* and *Cakrapuruṣa*. A tiny figure of *Bhūdevī* is seen emerging from the earth between the feet of the main deity. The composite image in the famous Devasar frame is also decked with a beaded necklace, *upavīta, vanamālā* and waist-cloth held to its position by the waist-belt.

The identification of this rare syncretic image by H. Goetz and D. Barrett has been that of Para-Vāsudeva[10] and Hayagriva[11] respectively. Such identifications, perhaps, are not in consonance with the realities of the said image.

The triad of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva composed in different tiers and in one body is rarely represented in the field of plastic art. It will not be out of place to make an allusion to the left wall of the *antarāla* of the Mārtaṇḍa temple where such a configuration is carved in the image of Viṣṇu standing under a trefoil arch.

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References

1. Dutta, M.M. (tr.), *Harivaṁśa*, Calcutta, 1897, p. 7911. For details about iconography see also *Matsya Purāṇa*, Ch. 260, vv. 21-27.
2. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (Vangavasi ed.), Part C, Chapter 33, 47-48. The *Manasollasa* gives a detailed analysis of the Hari-Hara image, see Sringondekar, G.K. (ed.), *Manasollasa*, Bk. III, Baroda, 1930, 746-63 lines.
3. Pandit, R.S. (ed.), *Rājataraṅgiṇī—The Saga of the Kings of Kashmir*, p. 683, see also p. 108.
4. Pal, P., "A Brahmanical Triad from Kashmir and Some Related Icons", *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 27, 1973-74, p. 43, fig. 17.
5. Kramrisch, S., *Manifestation of Shiva*, Philadelphia, 1981, fig. 19.
6. Pal, P., "A Brahmanical Triad from Kashmir and Some Related Icons", *op. cit.*, Vol. 27, 1973-74, p. 43.
7. *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa*, Vol. 42-43; cf. Parimoo, R. (ed.), *Vaiṣṇavism in Indian Art and Culture*, New Delhi, 1987, p. 387.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 388.
9. According to J.L. Bhan the said stone stands preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.
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9

Minor Deities

Lakṣmī

As is well-known, Lakṣmī has been nomenclatured as the goddess of fortune, riches and beauty. According to a very common legend, she is said to have sprung from the froth of the ocean of milk when it was put to churning. She is specifically associated with Viṣṇu as his consort. Whatever incarnations are assumed by Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī as his consort is supposed to be his wife by incarnating herself in various forms. The *Nilamata Purāṇa* refers to the goddess Lakṣmī with her origins from the ocean. She is also called as one who purifies all the three worlds. As per the same text, Lakṣmī has assumed the form of the roaring river Viśokā (modern Vyashav) only to purify the inhabitants of the Vale of Kashmir.[1] In Kashmir, there are a number of religious festivals which are directly related to her as a goddess. *Śrī Pañcamī* is one such festival which is celebrated on the 5th day of the brighter half of the month of Chaitra.[2] Occasionally Lakṣmī is also identified with Umā[3] as the consort of Śiva. As is available from the pages of the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, Pravarsena II is said to have constructed five temples in honour of the goddess Śrī[4] (Lakṣmī). According to the same text, a Brahman named Rakka donated an image of Śrī under the appellation of Rakkyayan Devi.[5]

That Lakṣmī was a popular goddess in Kashmir is established by the fact of the discovery of her images from various sites. The Śaiva temple of Vijayeśvara (modern Bijbehara) has an image of Gajalakṣmī (Fig. 51) dated stylistically to 5th-6th century A.D. The goddess Lakṣmī is shown seated in *utkutikāsana*, a posture introduced during Kuṣāṇa period. On either side of the shoulders of the goddess are two badly mutilated figures of elephants sprinkling water over the goddess (*abhiṣeka*-Lakṣmī). The Kashmirian image is made in dark limestone. Seated in the above posture, she on either side is flanked by two lions having disproportionately larger heads and crossed fore-paws. The manner in which Gajalakṣmī is scout-

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ing reminds one of scouting *mātṛkā* images of Mathura belonging to the Kuṣāṇa period. The figure as such is crude in execution. It is entirely lacking in life and vitality. The round face of it is not well-modelled. With a short neck, the figure has a clumsy chest as it is not given a round treatment. An image of the same type is available in the British Museum[6] and helps by way of comparison in fixing its date. A figure of *abhiṣeka*-Lakṣmī has also been reported by R.C. Kak.[7] It is seated on a lion throne. The left hand of the figure is holding a cornucopia, while the right hand is grasping a full-bloomed lotus. The hair of the goddess is held tight in an ornamental fillet. A couple of elephants standing behind the figure pour water over the head of the goddess from pitchers held in their trunks. The goddess, again, is sitting in an *utkutikāsana* and the dress apparelling her bears clear traces of the Gandharan impact. Avantisvāmin temple at Avantipur also housed an image of Lakṣmī in her *abhiṣeka* form. The figure precious from the viewpoint of sculptural art can be dated to 9th century A.D.

Vaiṣṇavī

Vaiṣṇavī in her essence a form of Lakṣmī is regarded as the *śakti* of Viṣṇu. She is one among the *sapta-mātṛkās* (seven mothers). That the *mātṛkās* were worshipped in Kashmir is established by the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* which specifically alludes to such worship. The images of *mātṛkās* were carved either independently or conjointly in a cluster. One such image (Fig. 52) dated 8th century A.D. was discovered at Vijabror (Anantnag district). The details of the said image include multiple-headed Bhairava flanked by Vaiṣṇavī mounting a Garuḍa and Cāmuṇḍā mounting an owl. As the image is defaced, it is difficult to dilate on its other details.

That Purāṇādhiṣṭhāna (modern Pandrethan) was an important centre for the worship of the *mātṛkās* is testified by the discovery of such images from the place. One such *mātṛkā* represents the torso of a Vaiṣṇavī figure (Fig. 53). The goddess is shown standing in *tribhaṅga* stance holding a wheel and a lotus in her right hands and a conch-shell in one of her left hands. The fourth hand is mutilated. Wearing a long *vanamālā*, the lower apparel of Vaiṣṇavī has been realistically adjusted with prominent folds betraying Gandharan and Scythian impact. As the image stands now, it fully represents the torso of a young damsel with full-developed breasts, narrow waist and heavy buttocks. The accumulation of muscles over her abdomen is remarkable from artistic viewpoint. The round breasts of the goddess are not fully covered. The bust of a Garuḍa is seen on the right side of the goddess. The Garuḍa bearing a human head has a pair of bulging eyes guarded by a pair of heavy eye-brows. That the said image is

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that of Vaiṣṇavī stands established by the attributes in her hands and the flanking figure of Garuḍa, her vehicle.

Vārāhī

Vārāhī symbolising *anusūya* (absence of envy) is the feminine aspect of Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu. She is one among the seven mothers conjointly known as *Saptamātṛkā-cakra.* In the Gupta period, the concept of the *saptamātṛkās* was replaced by *śaktis* of six gods,[8] namely, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Kumār, Indra and Varāha. Cāmuṇḍā was thought to represent all seven mothers in one.

It was at Purāṇādhiṣṭhāna (modern Pandrethan) that an image of Vārāhī (Fig. 54) was discovered. But, the image is badly disfigured. That she turns her boar-head to the right can be perceptibly seen. She has four hands, holding a rosary in her upper right hand and a club in her lower left hand. The attributes of the other two hands have suffered erosion due to weather and other factors. On Vārāhī's right side near her feet can be seen the fore-part of a Garuḍa, the vehicle of Viṣṇu, bearing visibly a pointed nose. The standing figure of Vārāhī as a whole is gracefully conceived against a plain *prabhāmaṇḍala.* Despite the erosion of the figure, one cannot but feel the softness of the body contours. There is a deep streak of sensuousness in the image. The bends of the torso, the manner of her body stance and the way she turns her animal head — all go to make the total figure alluringly sensuous.

Gaṅgā and Yamunā

There are numerous instances available in the realms of Indian art depicting Gaṅgā and Yamunā flanking images of Lord Viṣṇu. *Dvāraśākhās* are also available where Gaṅgā and Yamunā have been artistically depicted. The goddess Gaṅgā and Yamunā are said to be the consorts of Lord Viṣṇu. In Kashmir we have not been able to discover so far an independent image of Viṣṇu flanked by either of the above two goddesses.

Kashmir has yielded a few images of either Gaṅgā or Yamunā dated 8th century A.D. In Mārtaṇḍa temple we have the images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā. On either side of the doorway both of them are seen standing on their usual mounts. On the northern side of the *antarāla* (main shrine) is seen the goddess Gaṅgā within the trefoil niche (Fig. 55). She is gracefully standing with her body flexions on a *makara* (crocodile). Her left hand is slightly raised and in it she is holding a water-pot (*ghaṭa*). In her right hand she is grasping the stalk of a lotus. She is flanked by two attendants, one holding the stick of an umbrella spread over her head. The goddess

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Gaṅgā as such is said to symbolise a deep sense of purity. The Yamunā on the southern side is seen standing on her mount tortoise. She has two companions, one with an umbrella. Both the sculptures are in bad shape due to lack of preservation.

The above two goddesses never had or enjoyed the status of the cult deities indicating that the Kashmirian architects followed the early Indian tradition in which they are only depicted on *dvāraśākhās.*

In Baramula another image of Yamunā (now preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar) was discovered (Fig. 56). The image can be placed in 8th century A.D. Made in grey schist stone, the image is grasping a water-pot by its right hand and a lotus-stalk by its left hand. The figure of Yamunā in *tribhaṅga* posture is standing on her vehicle tortoise. She is slender and well-proportioned, but the acute twist in her body makes one feel that she will come to a breaking point any moment. Wearing a typically Kashmirian headgear, she is possessed of youth and charms natural in a feminine figure. Another image of Gaṅgā was also discovered from Purāṇādhiṣṭhāna (modern Pandrethan)[9] and stands preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.

The images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā were also found hewn on the walls of the Avantisvāmin temple, Avantipur, built by the king Avantivarman (855-883 A.D.). The river goddess Gaṅgā standing on her mount *makara* (crocodile) is found depicted on the northern wall of the outer compartment (Fig. 57). It is peculiar to see the feet of the Gaṅgā on a lotus which is placed above her vehicle, *makara.* The goddess is carrying the stalk of a lotus in her right hand and a water-pot in her left hand.

On the southern wall of the above-mentioned temple can be seen an image of the goddess Yamunā (Fig. 58) standing on a lotus above her vehicle, tortoise. She is holding a water-pot in her right hand and the stalk of a lotus in her left hand. In both the images (Figs. 57, 58) of the Avantisvāmin temple, one of the female companions can be discerned holding an umbrella over the heads of the goddesses. These two images are also adorned with a huge *vanamālā.* The two figures are so worn out that it is very difficult to focus on other minor details.

It is important to refer to an image of Yamunā (Fig. 59) discovered at Dhumatbhal (Anantnag district). Its present location is not fully known. Dated 11th century A.D., the image is shown standing on her mount tortoise in *tribhaṅga* posture. The goddess is holding a *cāuri* in her right hand. What could be there in her left hand is not perceptible as this portion of the figure is completely disfigured. She is flanked by three female figures, one on her right side and two on her left side. The female figure on the right side of the goddess is holding something, which is not clear, over her head with her two hands. On her left side is a female figure holding two pots by her raised two hands. The figure behind this figure is holding a garland by

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her two hands. It seems from the texture of the sculpture that they are going to pay obeisance to the main goddess.

Garuḍa

As the Hindu mythology puts it, Garuḍa born from an egg is said to be the son of Kāśyapa and Vinatā. He is not only the mount of Viṣṇu, but of Vaiṣṇavī as well. Garuḍa as part of various Vaiṣṇava images found in Kashmir either in anthropomorphic or half-vulture, half-man form has hands varying from two to eight. He is usually seen with the figures of deities like Viṣṇu, Vaikuṇṭha, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī and Hari-Hara. A four-handed Garuḍa is either in *namaskāra mudrā* or carries a water-pot with his two hands, while he is supporting the feet of the main deity with his other two hands (Figs. 8, 25, 27). A reference to a two-handed Garuḍa may be made where he is supporting the feet of the deity (Fig. 28). Garuḍa is shown only as a flanking figure in the images of *Yogāsana* Viṣṇu, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī and Hari-Hara.

It is interesting to find a frieze (now in bad shape) with Garuḍas in medallions (Fig. 60) on the northern wall of the outer chamber of the Avantisvāmin temple at Avantipur. The temple at Narasthan (Nārāyaṇasthān), 20 miles from Avantipur, has its apex adorned with a squat human figure, perhaps, representing Garuḍa.[10] It establishes that Garuḍa did not only enjoy the status of a mount but was also used to decorate the walls or apex of the Vaiṣṇava temples.

It is proper to make a reference to the garuḍa-*dhvaja* in the middle of the space lying between the gateway and the main shrine of the Avantisvāmin temple.[11] Garuḍa, therefore, is not only the vehicle of his master, but also forms a part of the standard of his master.

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Index

Abhinavagupta 3
Agni Purāṇa 35, 38
Agrawala, R.C. 23, 24, 26, 42
Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 35
Andrakot 14, 17
Aprājitaprichchhā 26
Aśoka 1
Avantipur 10, 22, 23, 24, 31, 56, 58, 59
Avantivarman 5, 22, 23, 58

Banerjea, J.N. 21
Barrett, D. 16, 53
Bhāgavatagītā 4, 34
Bhāgavata Purāṇa 4, 20, 39
Bhāgavatas 2
Bhan, J.L. 53
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi 15
Bhatt, Jayant 5
Bhattacharyya, D.C. 45
Bhawan 8
Bijbehara 4, 8, 9, 47, 48, 55
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 38
Bṛhad Brahma Saṁhitā 10
Bṛhat Saṁhitā 11
British Museum 45, 56
Buddhism 1
Bühler, G. 14
Bulbul Lankar 12
Buniyar 5

Caturvargacintamani 13, 25
Chatterji, J.C. 3
Coomaraswamy, A.K. 10

Daśāvatāracarita 34
Deo, S.B. 46
Desai, Kalpana 25, 42, 43
Devasar 12, 13, 15, 17, 27, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 53
Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa 53
Devi Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11, 39
Dhumatbhal 12, 16, 17, 25, 50, 52, 58

Gadadhara temple 22
Gandhara 21
Garuḍa Purāṇa 38
Gaya 46, 48
Goetz, H. 16, 27, 36, 53

Haribhaktivilāsa 46
Harivaṁśa 13, 36, 50
Himachal Pradesh 46, 47, 48

Jāyakhya Saṁhitā 12, 16, 20, 25, 41, 42
Joshi, M.C. 46, 47

Kak, R.C. 56
Kalhaṇa 5
Kārkoṭa 51
Kerala 46, 48
Kramrisch, Stella 51
Kṣemendra 34

Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple 12
Lalahar 41, 43
Lalitāditya 5, 21, 38
Liṅga Purāṇa 38

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Los Angeles County Museum of Art 42

Macdonell, A.A. 20
Madras Museum 30
Mahābhārata 7, 11, 13, 16, 20, 35, 36
Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa 46
Mārtaṇḍa temple 8, 9, 26, 53, 57
Mathura 21, 56
Matsya Purāṇa 11, 38
Megasthenes 7
Mitra, D. 26
Museum für Indische Kunst (Berlin) 21, 47, 50, 51

Narasthan 59
Nārāyaṇīya 3
National Museum, New Delhi 9, 12, 22, 26, 31, 46, 47
Nepal 45, 46, 47, 48
Newari 45, 46
Nilmata Purāṇa 2, 4, 8, 12, 14, 15, 20, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 53, 55

Osia 47

Pal, P. 15, 16, 45, 46, 47, 51, 52
Pan-Asian Collection 9
Pāñcarātra 2, 3, 20, 21, 23, 41
Pāṇini 7
Parihasapura 38
Pratapapur 3, 22, 23
Pravarsena II 55
Prince of Wales Museum 25
Punjab 21
Purāṇādhiṣṭhāna 56, 57, 58

Rājataraṅgiṇī 5, 16, 17, 21, 37, 38, 50, 55, 56
Rakka 55
Ramanuja 2
Rao, Gopinatha 29
Ray, S.C. 37
Rhys Davids 1
Rigveda 7, 20, 35
Rūpamaṇḍana 41

Sahni, D.R. 5
Saif-ud-din Pora (Srinagar) 53
Śaivism 1, 2
Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtradhāra 11
Sāṁkhya 2, 3, 16, 21
Śankaravarman 27, 36
Śāradātilakatantra 46
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 34, 35
Sāttvata Saṁhitā 10
Śāradāpīṭha 4
Sharma, B.N. 47
Śilparatna 30, 45, 46
Sircar, D.C. 46
Sivaramamurti, C. 30
Skanda Purāṇa 41
SPS Museum, Srinagar 8, 10, 22, 23, 24, 37, 42, 47, 58
Srinagar 3, 11, 22
Sten Konow 3
Sugandha 36

Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 7
Taittirīya Saṁhitā 35
Tantrasāra 45, 46

Varāhamūla 38
Varanag (Verinag) 8, 10, 22, 23, 25, 31, 37, 47
Ved Kumari 34
Vijabror 56
Vijayeśvara (Bijbehara) 55
Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa 2, 8, 9, 11, 15, 20, 21, 25, 26, 29, 30, 35, 36, 38, 39, 53
Viṣṇu Purāṇa 20, 38, 50
Viśokā 55

Zeithyar 41, 42, 43

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